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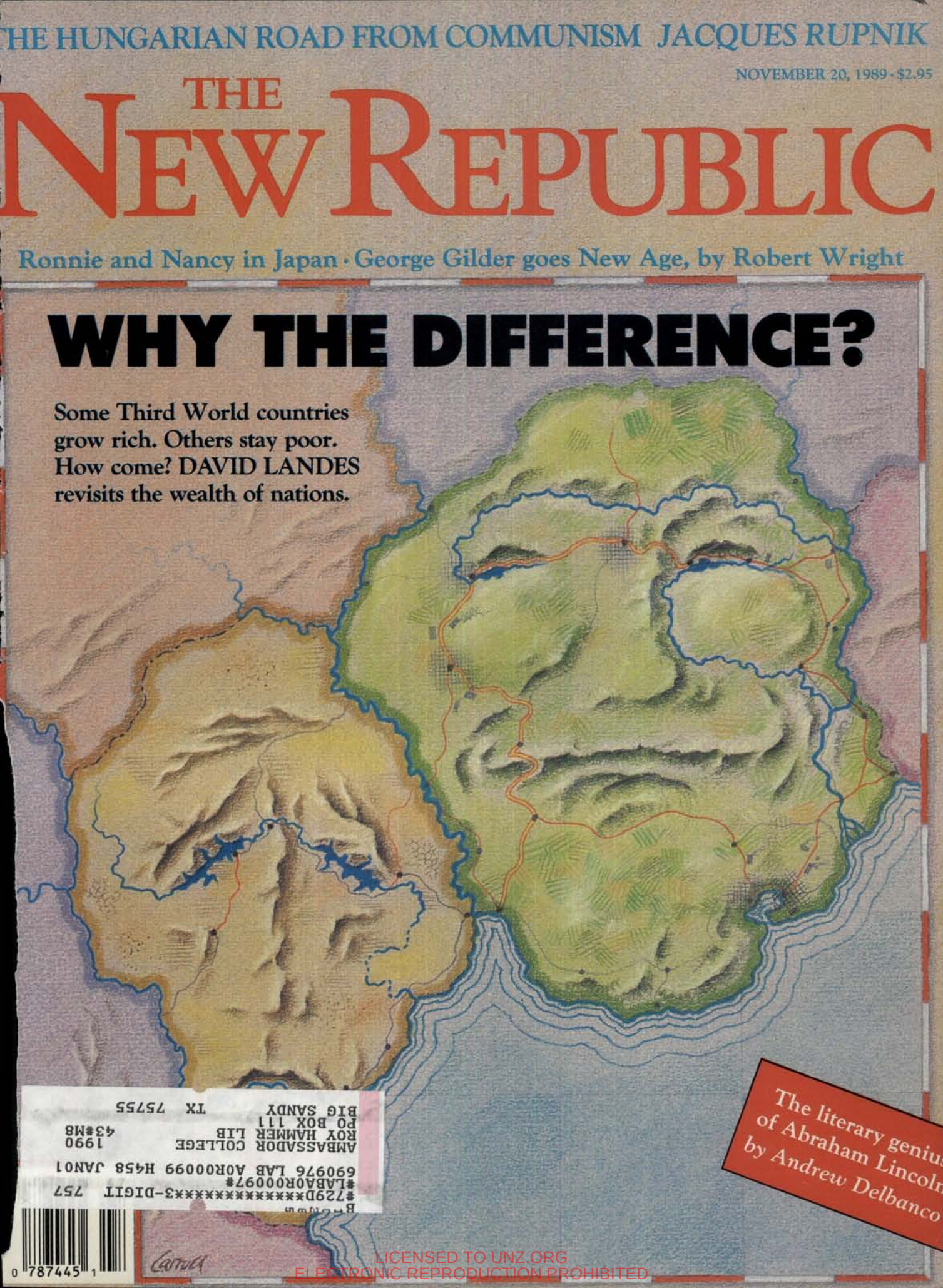

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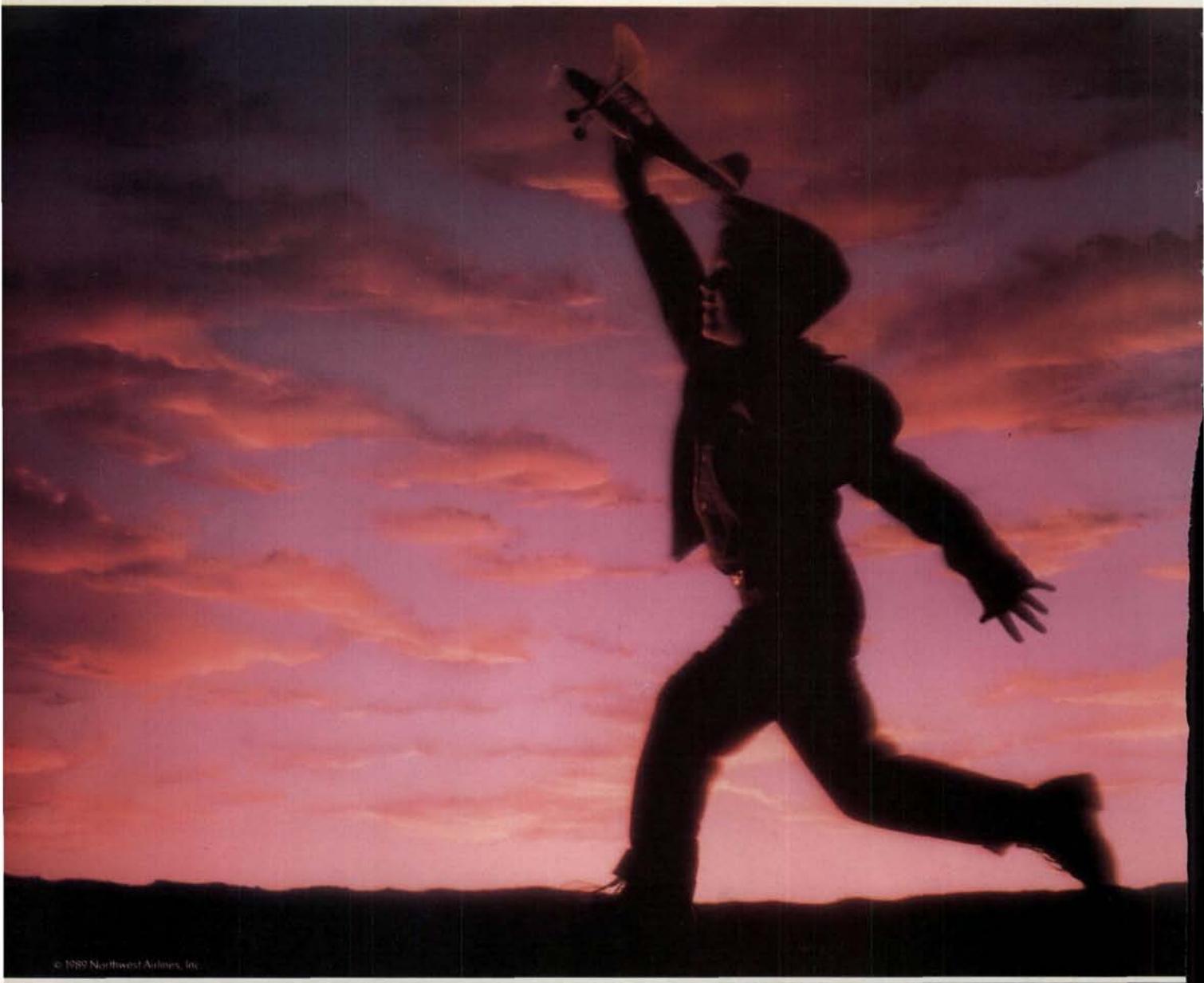


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NOVEMBER 20, 1989

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# TRB®
## FROM WASHINGTON

# Let him have it

The 1974 budget reform didn't work. Gramm-Rudman, vintage 1985, hasn't worked. The federal deficit is still out of control. This year's magic bullet seems to be the line-item veto—not a new idea, but one getting a sudden rush of attention during the annual fall budget-crisis festival.

You know the argument: Congress puts all its spending into huge jambalaya appropriation bills, leaving the President with the impossible choice of either approving pork barrel and waste or bringing the entire government to a halt with a veto. Ronald Reagan called endlessly for a constitutional amendment giving Presidents the right to veto individual items in a Congressional bill. George Bush has adopted the overheated view that, unbeknownst to his 40 predecessors, the Constitution already gives the President this right. He is "looking for . . . a suitable test case," says spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

The line-item veto conceit is based on two tiresome lies. First, that pork barrel and waste are responsible for the deficit. And second, that Presidents have tried and failed to rein in a spendthrift Congress. Throughout the Reagan-Bush era there has been virtually no difference between the amount of spending the President has proposed each year and the amount in the budget Congress finally has passed. The argument has been over what the money is spent for. And even here, neither Reagan nor Bush has ever challenged the really big-ticket items, which are middle-class entitlements. In fiscal 1990, non-defense discretionary spending—everything the government does except defense, entitlements, and interest on the debt—will be about $200 billion, or less than a sixth of the total budget. Entitlements—Social Security, Medicare, farm price supports, etc., as well as programs explicitly for the poor—will be almost $600 billion, or half the budget.

A conservative myth is growing up that the President actually used to have the line-item veto through a process called "impoundment" that was outlawed in the 1974 budget reform. "Impoundment" means simply refusing to spend money Congress has appropriated. Until Richard Nixon, Presidents used impoundment sparingly—usually in cases where a federal project came in under budget (always a rare event), or where the money couldn't be spent on the stated purpose. When Nixon tried to use impoundment as a backdoor veto (which couldn't even be overridden), he was shot down by the courts. According to Lewis Fisher of the Library of Congress, who has studied these things, the White House actually welcomed the 1974 budget reform, which allows the President to propose "recisions" in Congress's budget, as better than nothing.

The notion that the President already has a line-item veto is the latest expression of the new conservative judicial activism: using fanciful theories to get their way through the courts when they can't get their way democratically. This is just how conservatives have accused liberals of misbehaving for decades.

Unlike other conservative activist theories—rent control is unconstitutional, the President may ignore the War Powers Act, and so on—this one at least is aimed at enforcing the Constitution's democratic scheme, rather than overriding it. Still, the reasoning is strained. It focuses on the "presentment clause" of the Constitution, which says that "every order, resolution, or vote" of Congress "shall be presented to the President" so he can have a chance to veto it. The purpose was to prevent Congress from evading the veto power by labeling its actions something other than a "bill." To say that this unconstitutional evasion occurs whenever Congress puts more than one directive in the same bill would leave the courts with the impossible job of deciding what is a "bill" within a larger bill. Almost every piece of legislation does more than one thing. The question of what exactly is a "line item" plagues all efforts to create a line-item veto, but asking judges to find the solution to such a complex technical matter by peering into the Constitution is truly activism rampant.

Senators Dan Coats and John McCain have got 31 co-sponsors for a less ambitious line-item veto. They would revise the budget law so that twice a year the President could propose "recisions" in Congressional appropriations. Congress would have to vote "no" on the entire package to prevent the cuts from going into effect. They want to attach this idea as an amendment to the forthcoming bill to raise the debt ceiling—thereby committing the very sin they complain of.

The Coats bill is a bit of a fraud, since most serious federal spending decisions

*continued on page 46*


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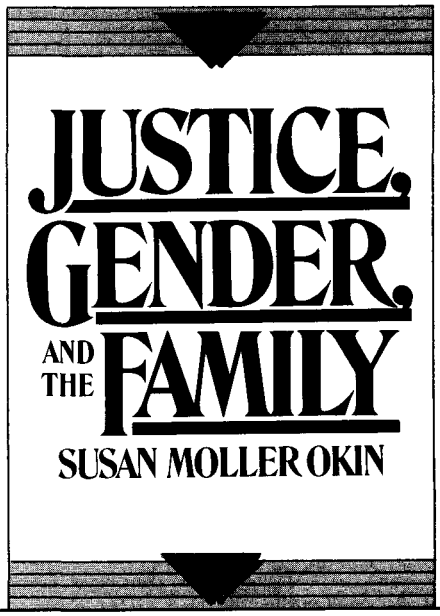


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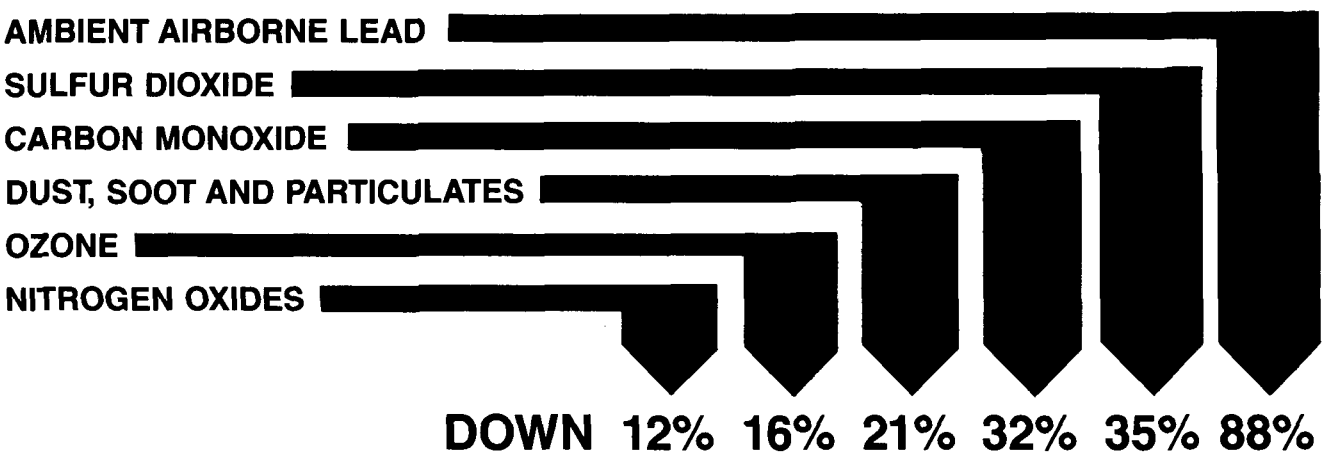


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# CORRESPONDENCE

## The Salvadoran solution

**To the editors:**

If the U.S.-sponsored war in El Salvador is anachronistic ("The War That Will Not End," October 16), then so is Charles Lane's stubborn disregard of the underlying issue, the Salvadoran people's right to self-determination. His quarrel with the Reagan-Bush-Quayle line of support for a military solution is over tactics, not aims. Washington's right to decide Salvador's future never comes into question. Though he mentions the broad front of opposition to the new ARENA government, not once does he imply that the Salvadoran people themselves might have a solution to the civil conflict. Instead, he shares a trunkload of anxieties over how U.S. efforts to legitimize and sanitize an unpopular, corrupt, and repressive regime have failed and probably will continue to fail.

If the "geopolitical rationale" for a military solution is gone, then what rationale remains for the forms of intervention that Lane seems to suggest? If the Soviet Union can accept Hungary and Poland moving toward capitalism (as they appear to be), why couldn't the U.S. tolerate a tiny non-capitalist state in Central America if the natives want it that way?

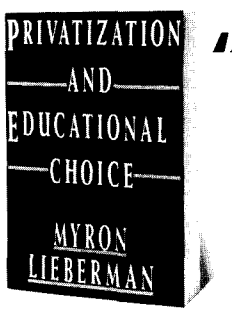
MARK CHALKLEY
*Takoma Park, Maryland*

**To the editors:**

Charles Lane's proposal for what can be called a kinder, gentler U.S. policy for El Salvador is contradictory. Calling for the United States to facilitate a "better combat performance from the [Salvadoran] army" combined with increased economic aid for the rural poor flies in the face of the U.S.-directed counterinsurgency, which aims to remove the FMLN's civilian base of support by destroying communities and crops and preventing health care and education in zones of conflict.

Since 1980, when the counterinsurgency began, one out of five Salvadorans has been displaced by air force bombing and army scorched-earth tactics, costing the United States $900 million in military aid and at least $500 million in covert aid. By suggesting that U.S. policy can undercut popular support for the FMLN with rural development programs and without demanding total military reform, Lane is asking U.S. policy to shoot itself in the foot.

CHRIS PEACOCK
*New York, New York*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## Crude facts

**To the editors:**

In discussing Manuel Lujan's support for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration, Bruce Reed parrots the standard environmentalist dogma that the odds are 4-to-1 against another big find in the Arctic ("Half Watt," October 16). He misses the significance of these numbers.

When the oil industry evaluates new prospects for a wildcat well, a five percent likelihood for discovery of commercial reserves is considered sufficient to justify the cost of exploration. In Alaska, the odds have been consistently of the order of one-in-50. At the time of discovery of the Prudhoe Bay field, chances of a giant discovery were estimated to be two percent. A 19 percent chance of a major find in the ANWR is a spectacular possibility. Also, in the past 15 years of exploration around the United States, the average new field discovery has been one million barrels. A low-end estimate of the ANWR potential is for 3.2 billion barrels, many times the estimate for any other possible new discovery in the country.

Developing an oil field of this magnitude can be accomplished using current technology on a small fraction of one percent of the 19 million acres of the Refuge, and will allow production through the existing Trans-Alaska pipeline and the port of Valdez, which, after the Exxon disaster, will be the most rigidly regulated facility in the world.

ROBERT W. MALMSTROM
*King City, Oregon*

## Academic collusion course

**To the editors:**

Ian Ayers's explanation of the current system of college admissions errs in its purely economic aspects ("Colleges in Collusion," October 16). The relationship between student applicant and aid-offering university is not a simple buyer-vendor arrangement. In Ayres's ideal type of a free college market, the most prestigious admissions would go for the highest prices, and the great universities would again become the sole preserve of the wealthy. This may be justice, market-style, but it surely flies in the face of other, more important social goals. If Ayres's ideas were adopted and extended to include athletic scholarships, the free market in college tuition would produce a situation remarkably similar to that of early 20th-century America. The Ivy League and a few giant state universities would be stuffed with athletes and the well

*continued on page 46*



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 20, 1989

# THE END OF DISCUSSION

One of the most distinguished members of the "defense community" in Washington was caught with an expression of despair at a sandwich counter the other day. He was worrying whether he'd make it to retirement in his business. The occasion for his anxiety was, of course, *glasnost*, *perestroika*, the vaunted breakup of the Soviet empire. He was trained, after all, to deter—to manage deterrence, to justify deterrence, to extend deterrence, to equip deterrence—and now it seemed that pretty soon there would be nobody left to deter. Drugs and terrorism, the table crumbs of national security policy that the professionals used to leave to the journalists, are suddenly the main course. Peace is breaking out, and the man has two daughters in college.

On Halloween, in the course of announcing his December 2-3 seagoing non-summit with Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush told reporters, in no uncertain terms, that "we want to see *perestroika* succeed." It may be concluded from this that the great debate of the past few years, about whether it is in America's interest to deal with a strong Soviet Union or a weak Soviet Union, has been settled. Well, not quite. The relaxation of tensions is not exactly the same thing as the relaxation of vigilance. Unfortunately, as Deputy National Security Adviser Robert M. Gates wanted to point out, no American-supplied Soviet strength can correct for the structural weaknesses of an empire imposed upon unwilling ethnic and national groups. And a Soviet Union that turns its back on communism is still a Soviet Union with nuclear weapons, and with interests around the world: still a rival of the United States, strategically if not philosophically. Our friend the defense consultant need not despair. Indeed, he and his colleagues had better stay right on top of developments; it will be more confusing, not less confusing, to manage merely a great power rivalry.

And yet we all may be forgiven if we wake up every day to a powerful sensation of history. The front pages of our newspapers can barely contain the tidings from all the newly freed corners of the Communist world. The foreign minister of the Soviet Union now says that the invasion of Afghanistan was illegal and immoral, now says that the radar installation at Krasnoyarsk was a violation of the ABM Treaty (the Committee on the Present Danger is owed an apology, though a small one), now says that there should be a "gradual phasing-out" of Eastern and Western alliances. Hungary announces it is no longer a "people's republic," but will rather be a republic by the people. (See "Hungary's Quiet Revolution" by Jacques Rupnik, page 18.) We *are* living, as Adam said to Eve on their way out of Eden, in an age of transition, even if we are not quite finding our way back to the Garden. There are only a few Americans left who have failed to grasp the enormity of the changes that are taking place in Lenin's orbit and beyond. A number of them are to be found at 22nd and C, in the Department of State, and at 16th and Pennsylvania, in the White House.

The deputy director of policy planning at the State Department has become famous for concluding that history has ended. The seriousness with which this idea is taken has produced the greatest intellectual comedy in the nation's capital since SDI. And yet the comedy is not altogether funny. For Francis Fukuyama has put his finger not on the cunning of history, but on the cunning of the Administration. Or rather, on its spectacular lack of cunning. President Bush must have been relieved to learn that history is over, because for a while it looked like he might have to take part in it.

The tale of this Administration's engagement with the end of the 20th century is pitiful. "Beyond containment" was its early slogan, which communicated a sense of movement, and nothing at all about a goal. Now the criticism of its quietism appears to have stung



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it into activism, sort of. A few weeks ago Secretary of State James Baker made a speech, to give a fuller look at the Administration's understanding of its historical moment.

The speech is full of good sense, of fine and common notions about the origins of Gorbachev's reforms, and about the very limited impact that American action can have on the future of Soviet society and the Soviet economy. About foreign policy, the Secretary seems to feel that the ideological contest is slowly but surely becoming a strategic contest; and we have no quarrel with that, either. "Points of mutual advantage" is Baker's slogan: "Our mission must be to press the search for mutual advantage," to find "mutual interests." In Central America, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Africa, conflict resolution, not victory à la the previous Administration, is the American objective. And, in the spirit of Kissinger, the Soviet Union is assured that the United States will not "exploit the movement toward freedom [in Eastern Europe] in order to harm the security of the Soviet Union." A new realism, in sum, even if it is philosophically unremarkable and intellectually flat. Come home, Hans Morgenthau, all is forgiven.

Baker's statement was still a little short of practical proposals. His insistence that we can (should?) do nothing to help Gorbachev get his house in order appears to have left the Secretary with a policy vacuum. His paragraphs on financial assistance to Poland still fail to stir, and bring to mind mainly the pressure of Congress. Having said that "it is not our business to reform Soviet society," he mutters a peroration about "technical assistance in certain areas of Soviet economic reform."

Still, Baker was beginning to convince us that the passivity was over, that the Administration was finally going to work. Then Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* revealed that the work was more political than diplomatic, more like public relations than historical transformation. Friedman reported on October 26 that Baker had muzzled Gates, the top expert on Soviet affairs at the White House, and forbidden him to deliver a speech of his own in which he discussed the possibility that Gorbachev might fail.

Only three days before, in a speech on arms control in San Francisco, Baker had discussed "the need for informed debate." "It is imperative," he said, "that we maintain open and honest discussions about strategy and arms control matters within the strategic community and with the public at large." Presumably the all-important question of *perestroika*'s prospects is a legitimate part of the discussion of strategy. There are certain ways in which *perestroika* might fail that would make the world a *much* more dangerous place.

So the Administration goes from saying little to rigging what is said, from ignoring the good news to banning the bad news, from drift to dogma. Never has foreign policy been so moved, or not moved, on the basis of politics and the hunger for popularity. For the image-maker, history never ends.

# CHARADE IN TAIF

There have been literally hundreds of cease-fires in the Lebanese fratricide, and almost as many actual conferences convened to end it. Each of these gatherings is a lesson in the intractability of the differences that mark the Arab world. But the peace conference concluded recently in the Saudi resort town of Taif is one for the books—the political anthropology books, that is. Under the patronage of the wealthiest—hence the most frightened—regime in the Middle East, the assembly brought together remnants of those who ruled "before the fall," before the slaughter began nearly 15 years ago.

Sixty-two of the 99 members of the Lebanese parliament elected in 1972 came in answer to King Fahd's summons. (The call of a Saudi potentate usually puts the hearer in mind of the likelihood of some cash.) Of those who came, three no longer live in Lebanon, but have journeyed from new abodes: one from Geneva, another from Paris, still another from Detroit. Ten stayed home. Twenty-seven members of that parliament are dead, the lucky ones from natural causes. Those in attendance represent only the past, which was itself a delusion. They lead no sects, command no militias, have no say with or over anyone. They are also without moral authority, though they quarrel endlessly among themselves. Still, they have produced an accord of sorts, one that decreases the sway in parliament of the Christians. But the Syrians, who have 40,000 troops in Lebanon, have not committed themselves to anything like a withdrawal from Lebanon, which is still theirs. They were not present in Taif. Neither were the other real Lebanese powers, the warlords: General Aoun and Dr. Geagea of the Falange; Nabih Berri of the Shiite Amal; Walid Jumblat, the hereditary feudal chief of the Druze, whom the press insists on calling "left-wing." (No one from the Party of God, either.) So their grievances were not met. The Shiites, who have the greatest unsatisfied claim on the system, have not been pacified by the new mechanics that were designed, as the Saudis would have it, to bolster the old Sunni elites.

It is just possible that this parliamentary residue might actually elect a president, as it has not been able to do for a year. But he will have no power beyond the palace. Nonetheless, his election would be a fig leaf to allow the Saudis to claim they had contributed to intra-Arab peace in one of those places afflicted with intra-Arab war. Lebanon itself will still be a memory from the past. We understand why some Lebanese and the Saudis like to play such charades. There is no reason, however, for the State Department to encourage others to think that what happened in Taif was real politics or will become real history.



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# ORTEGA'S PLOY

It's gratifying how unanimously Latin Americans, Democrats and Republicans in the United States, and newspaper editorialists all over the democratic world have denounced Daniel Ortega's cancellation of his 19-month cease-fire with remnants of the *contra* force still operating inside Nicaragua. In particular, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell has vowed that Ortega will not achieve his apparent purpose: getting Congress to force the dismantlement of the *contras* prior to the Nicaraguan elections scheduled for February 25. But the game is more complicated than it looks. Some creative Administration action is called for, lest Ortega wrest victory from the jaws of defeat.

Contrary to much conventional wisdom, and to right-wing criticism, the President's strategy in Nicaragua has been working rather well. The critics doubted that the unarmed internal opposition to the Sandinistas could unify and organize to mount an effective campaign. But it has done so. It rallied around Violeta Chamorro, publisher of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa* and widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, who was murdered while helping lead the opposition to the old Somoza dictatorship.

Polls, such as they are in Nicaragua, show Mrs. Chamorro ahead, 40 percent to 29 percent. And no wonder. The Sandinistas have made a wreckage of the Nicaraguan economy. Their leadership is widely accused of corruption, living lavishly (by Nicaraguan standards) in old Somoza-era estates and enjoying the best of what the country can afford to import on handouts from Cuba and the Soviet bloc. Political experts figure that 29 percent of the population is about all that the Sandinistas could count on in the upcoming election: that's about the percentage of the country represented by the army, the bureaucracy, and the party faithful. The other 70 percent is suffering repression and want, and in a free election might just throw the Sandinista rascals out.

So Ortega decided he had to do something. His announced cancellation of the cease-fire brought him nothing but condemnation, and it was essentially a phony action anyway. As Americas Watch reported this spring, the Sandinistas have been steadily conducting an Operation Phoenix-style terror campaign against the families of *contra* supporters. Of the 12,000 *contra* fighters, only 2,000 are believed to be operating inside Nicaragua, and they are scattered and inclined to lie low. Whatever deadly mischief they may have gotten up to, they have had no arms supplies from the United States for 18 months, and they present no serious threat to the well-equipped Sandinista army of 70,000 men.

Ostensibly, Ortega has two motives for pretending the *contras* are a threat. First, he hopes to rally his countrymen against the *yanqui*, linking Uncle Sam, the *contras*, and Mrs. Chamorro. This is not likely to work. The Nicaraguan people know—the Sandinista press has not let them forget—that the opposition is getting money from the United States (as is Nicaragua's Sandinista-dominated electoral commission). Few seem to care.

Ortega's second purpose, it seems, is to force the U.S. Congress to vote this month to dismantle the *contra* force in Honduras before the February elections. The Central American presidents have voted for "voluntary" disbandment, and a United Nations panel has urged that it commence immediately. The Bush Administration has declared it wants the *contras* to be kept together through February, so that if Ortega should cancel the election or steal it, Manuel Noriega-style, the option would be open to resume military aid and reopen guerrilla war.

However, Ortega may be up to something even shrewder. If Congress votes for humanitarian aid to keep the *contras* alive, Ortega may use this as a pretext to cancel the February elections and dare Bush to propose a resumption of military aid. There are lots of reasons to think that he would not do so, that Congress wouldn't support him if he did, and that Central Americans would oppose resumption of the guerrilla war. Ortega may calculate that if his friend, Noriega, can traduce an election and get away with it, why can't he do the same?

The President can do something about this, now. He can make an affirmative pledge—which Congress can write into law—that if Nicaragua holds elections in February that are internationally recognized as fair, then whatever the electoral outcome the United States will see to it that the *contras* are disbanded forthwith and resettled. As a token of good faith, the United States could even offer to move part of the *contra* force back to the United States until February.

What happens if Ortega still cancels or steals the election? We'll have to wait and see. It could be that under those circumstances things will have moved in Nicaragua to the critical mass of the Philippines, and that Mrs. Chamorro could come to power as Corazon Aquino did. Or, if the Sandinistas use force against the civilian opposition, as Ferdinand Marcos did not do (but Noriega did), the *contras* might at last acquire the wide popular support inside Nicaragua they have lacked in the past, and Congress could vote them military aid with a clear bipartisan conscience.

## NOTEBOOK

ET TU, EDUARD? The traditional practice of giving the Soviets the benefit of the doubt on arms control disputes, while questioning the motives of the Nixon-Ford-Carter-Reagan-Bush Administrations, has gotten its comeuppance from the unlikeliest of sources. The occasion is Krasnoyarsk, the Soviet radar station that President Reagan argued was a violation of the ABM Treaty. Oh, come on, you're just trying to undermine



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arms control, Reagan was told. The Arms Control Association dismissed Krasnoyarsk as insignificant and said the Soviets wouldn't back down on it anyway. The Federation of American Scientists said fear of Krasnoyarsk was "more a product of faulty deduction than of analysis of the facts." McGeorge Bundy, George Kennan, Robert McNamara, and Gerard Smith declared it "of only marginal importance." Representatives Thomas Downey, Jim Moody, and Bob Carr toured the site in 1987 and found it "not a violation of the ABM Treaty at this time." Now Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze says it's "a clear violation" of the ABM Treaty. Oops.

**Nobel Prize, ignoble story.**

# TIBET'S AGONY

*By Maura Moynihan*

The Tiananmen Square massacre was undoubtedly one of the precipitating factors in the Norwegian Nobel Committee's decision to give this year's Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama. But the choice of Tibet's exiled leader may also focus some attention on one of the cruelest and most neglected stories of the 20th century, the 30-year military occupation and annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese government's rigid control of information and its persistent efforts to discredit the Dalai Lama as a political leader have kept the world largely ignorant of China's record in Tibet. Tibet's exoticism and that of the Dalai Lama—who wears the maroon robes and shaved head of a Buddhist priest, and who adheres to a monastic routine—have made China's task easier. (The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, unsure exactly who and what the Dalai Lama is, commended his cause but complained that his selection for the prize "doesn't sit quite right.") Whenever the Dalai Lama goes abroad, the Chinese lobby government officials to cancel meetings with him. He is not welcome at the U.S. State Department, and no American President has been willing to shake his hand.

The Chinese crimes in Tibet—which have been documented and confirmed by human rights groups such as Asia Watch and Amnesty International, the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in India, and several committees of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives—are so horrifying that the Dalai Lama's commitment to nonviolence and his willingness to negotiate with the Chinese in good faith are all the more remarkable. Since the People's Republic's "Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" in 1959, 1.2 million people—20 percent of the Tibetan population—have been killed off, many through armed conflict and massive famines resulting from collectivized farming and the diversion of Tibetan grain to China. As John Avedon documented in his 1984 book *In Exile from the Land of Snows*, Chinese troops of the People's Liberation Army and the Public Security Bureau routinely practiced the most sickening kinds of torture upon Tibetans, including disembowelment, mutilations, and blindings, and Tibetan women were subjected to gang rapes. Some atrocities abated after the end of the Cultural Revolution, but several thousand Tibetans today are interned for political crimes. Tibetan women are still subjected to forced sterilizations and abortions, and there are reports that some have been raped in prisons with electric cattle prods.

Tibetan Buddhism itself, labeled a "disease" to be eradicated through Communist indoctrination, has been the target of a full-scale campaign of destruction. Under Mao Zedong some 6,000 monasteries, the centers of cultural and scholastic life, were dynamited, burned, or dismantled, their art treasures destroyed, transported to Beijing, or sold in foreign auction houses. During the period of economic reform under Deng Xiaoping the assault on Tibetan culture eased, but the use of the Tibetan language in the schools remains highly restricted above the primary grades.

Tibet's forests have been stripped for timber, and there are reports that the land is being used for nuclear waste repositories. In a massive population transfer, Han Chinese now outnumber Tibetans more than 3-to-1 and are given better jobs, housing, and services. Chinese men earn financial bonuses if they settle in Tibet and marry Tibetan women. These policies have not changed.

Because visits from foreign diplomats and news organizations are strictly limited, for many years much reliable information about Tibet has come from refugees in India and Nepal. This year the People's Liberation Army has tightened border surveillance; as of July only 93 people had escaped this year without being shot to death or traded back to the PLA by corrupt Nepalese border guards, whereas 600 crossed the border in the first half of 1988. Since the Chinese decision to develop Tibet as a tourist attraction in the early 1980s, some eyewitness reporting has come from Westerners traveling with tourist visas.

The Tiananmen Square crackdown was foreshadowed in Tibet. Earlier this year, on March 9, the eve of the 30th anniversary of the Chinese invasion, the Chinese instituted martial law in Lhasa, Tibet's capital. The next day American, British, and Australian tourists called the wire services from hotel telephones with descriptions of Chinese soldiers shooting unarmed demonstrators, breaking into homes to drag people into police vans, and firing on women and children. Within days all foreigners were expelled from Tibet and the story dropped out of the news. Conditions in Lhasa have since grown worse, according to what little infor-



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mation has trickled out. Asia Watch reports that many demonstrators were sent to labor camps and that prisoners are being tortured with cattle prods. Tourist services have resumed, but the army maintains a strict curfew, and foreigners cannot leave their hotels without a Chinese guide and a military pass.

It was a fortuitous accident that television cameras were able to deliver live coverage of the Tiananmen Square events and expose China's leadership for what it is. By contrast, the Chinese government has managed to escape accountability for its long occupation of Tibet. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama will help. But as long as martial law prevails and Western nations choose to ignore China's record on human rights abuses, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to observe and influence events in Lhasa.

MAURA MOYNIHAN, a New York writer, travels frequently to South Asia.

## ON THE HILL

# HOGROLLING

*By Alex Heard*

Talk about white-knuckle situations. Thanks to a helpful introduction by Wayne Curtin—the national director of the Motorcycle Riders Foundation, a two-year-old Washington lobbying group concerned with bikers' rights—I was allowed to sit in on a strategy meeting of national biker leaders who had come to D.C. to speak out against Senate Bill 1007, a highway safety measure introduced last May by Senator John Chafee. Among other things, the bill would withhold a percentage of federal highway funds from states that fail to pass mandatory helmet laws for motorcycle riders of all ages. This provision makes it the ultimate nightmare for bikers obsessed with what countless poems by Harley-Davidson lovers have called "ridin' free in the wind."

A hearing was scheduled for the next day, before the Senate Subcommittee on Water Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure. The biker-lobbyists had spent a grueling day talking to Senators and aides, and now were holding 11th-hour discussions in Capitol Hill's Bellevue Hotel. But first, Mr. Reporter had to answer a few questions. A burly, pony-tailed man who I later learned was the founder and chairman of MRF, Michael "Balls" Farabaugh, gruffly asked, "What kind of magazine is this NEW REPUBLIC?"

"Well," I said, easing into a chair. "Well. It's sort of—"

"Please stand so everyone can hear you." This from Curtin, my valued go-between. Essentially they wanted to know whether TNR leans more to the left or the right. But somehow the idea of going into much detail about the lively yet congenial philosophical tussles among its editors seemed inadvisable. The wisest course appeared to be to keep it general, for the biker policy mind, as I understand it, is an odd mix. It's anti-Democratic (they hate liberal Safety Nannies like Ralph Nader), anti-Republican (as the narrator of my favorite biker short story, "Weekend Run," puts it: "Hell, ridin' a bike is just part of what square dudes *ain't* diggin' "), flat-out libertarian, pro-union, jingoistically patriotic, charity-minded (many motorcycle clubs organize fund-raising "runs" for the Muscular Dystrophy Association), and strongly attached to our inalienable right to ride throbbin' Milwaukee iron, drink many brews, and hold up hand-lettered cardboard signs at Daytona Beach that say, "PLEASE show us your bodacious TA-TA's."

I didn't know what the men in this room did in their off hours, but they had the basic look—jeans, minor leather, T-shirts, bushy beards, ponytails, biceps like footballs—that cries out "Scooter Tramp." So, rising on creaky knees, I strived for vagueness: "TNR is a national journal of opinion," I beeped, "that used to be really—well, *kind of* really—liberal, but now isn't quite as much, but writers aren't forced to be either." In a 1988 issue of *American Bikers Journal*, Balls Farabaugh wrote that bikers are suspicious of a newcomer until he proves he "deserve[s] to exist in our world." But he let me stay anyway. So no one can tell me that these bikers, whatever else they may be, are not small-d democrats.

As Farabaugh noted during that night's confab, biker lobbying has come a long way since its riotous early years. "We didn't know how to argue the issue 15 years ago," he reminisced. "Remember how we used to put helmets on legislators and clap and say, 'Can you tell where the sound's coming from? No? See!' " He was referring to primitive show-and-tell tactics sometimes used during the watershed period in which "modern" biker lobbying methods were perfected: the mid-'70s. In 1966 passage of the Highway Safety Act authorized the Government to withhold highway funds as a means of coercing states into passing helmet laws, and a small but active segment of bikerdom began to realize that traditional political methods were the only way to fight regulation.

At first things didn't go well. Within three years of the act's passage, 47 states and D.C. passed mandatory helmet laws. But in 1975 and 1976, after the Department of Transportation began proceedings against the holdout states of California, Illinois, and Utah, Congress held hearings that were dominated by lobbying from groups such as the American Motorcycle Association and A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactment (ABATE). Senators Alan Cranston and Jesse Helms attached an amendment to the Federal Aid Highway Safety Act of 1976 that gutted the federal power to force the helmet issue, and by 1981, 29 states had



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repealed their helmet laws or modified them to apply only to riders under a certain age—usually 18.

During the '80s this and other key biker issues have been fought mainly in the states. (Biker lobbyists much prefer waging their wars state-by-state and often use a "states' rights" angle to argue against federal initiatives.) In recent years biker lib has achieved mixed results. Anti-helmet law forces have lost in Oregon, Texas, and Nebraska. However, last July California Governor George Deukmejian vetoed a bill requiring mandatory helmet use for all ages. As the national count now stands, 22 states and D.C. have helmet laws that apply to all riders; 24 have laws that apply to younger age groups; and Colorado, Illinois, and Iowa have no helmet law at all.

Why bikers hate helmet laws so much mystifies some people, including me. A mountain of evidence exists that says helmets (overall, not in every crash) save lives and prevent crippling injuries, and both Curtin and Farabaugh say they almost always wear their buckets. But riders don't want to *have* to wear them, and some, like Gary Busey, carry their stubbornness about this matter to the point of idiocy. Biker lobbyists spend a lot of time looking for flaws in the helmet-safety research, but the nut of their argument is what they like to call "freedom of choice." Like handgun-rights people, they are fond of quoting the Founders' statements on personal liberty. Benjamin ("They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety") Franklin is now an honorary biker bro'.

The men at the strategy meeting were not really worried about losing freedom. The MRF's federal specialist, Howard Segermark, told the group the Chafee bill has almost no chance of passing. A lot of key Senators feel this is an issue best left to the states, he said, and there is no interest in it in the House. But he also described a couple of tricky parliamentary maneuvers Chafee might pull to give the bill a boost, and said the issue would probably be raised again during 1990 debate on highway funding. Even so, spirits were running high among the bikers. "We got a fuckin' wound in 'em this big," Farabaugh exulted, "and we're sticking it in! *Do not* fuck with motorcycle riders!" Curtin, a more cautious sort, closed the session by warning against unruly hearing antics and laying down a dress code: "Shirts with collars at the very least. The media will be looking for wild clothes that they can sensationalize, and I don't want to . . . frigging give them that." "And wear deodorant this time!" Segermark yelled.

Early the next day the bikers and a few righteous women, the whole crew looking very sharp, assembled in Dirksen 406 for what turned out to be a low-key debate. C-SPAN didn't cover it, and the whole thing lacked the electric atmosphere that sometimes surrounds offbeat hearings. The panels were slightly stacked with pro-helmet forces, but both sides had ample time to air their now-familiar arguments. Pro-helmets said universal use of seat belts and helmets would save society millions of dollars and prevent thousands of deaths. Anti-helmets said (and said) the answer was not helmet laws, but funds for rider education. The liveliest moment came, fittingly, during Balls Farabaugh's testimony. Balls, a top motorcycle-skills instructor, boasted that he has "16,000 graduates under my belt."

"Did you *devour* them?" asked Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. No, said Balls, but there had been a few female students he found mighty delectable. Balls wasn't the only one who hurt himself by speaking off the cuff. Moynihan was in a puckish mood and kept mumbling barely audible cracks and theories. Following testimony by a young University of Southern California researcher, James V. Ouellet, who said that Harley-Davidson riders are only half as likely as Kawasaki riders to wear helmets, Moynihan began a long ramble about people who are "attracted to risk." Tank corps soldiers, he said, take as much risk as anybody, and they wear *their* helmets. Perhaps the thing for Harley-Davidson to do, he mused, would be to produce ads that feature a tank-corps sergeant "who says, 'I am a master sergeant, I drive a Harley, and I wear a helmet. Any private I find without a helmet has got a lot of problems with me.' "

Uh, bitchin' idea, Pat. The bikers were, naturally, miffed about this—anything that sullies the sacred Harley name is despised—but most of their ire was directed at Ouellet and his study, which they claim is statistically unsound. In a phone interview that afternoon, a seething Balls said, "The man took what is high school-level research and extrapolated it irresponsibly." I looked at the receiver skeptically. That didn't sound like the Balls I knew. "I mean, this guy is one low-life piece a' shit." Yep, it was him.

ALEX HEARD is a frequent contributor.

**Importing drugs to ourselves.**

# COCAINE CHEMISTRY

*By Peter Andreas*

In the demonology of the war on drugs, Latin American countries are commonly cited as *the* source of the cocaine flooding the United States. Yet U.S.-made chemicals are the critical ingredients that keep those countries' drug laboratories running. Washington has been spending billions trying to keep drugs out of the country while doing little to keep drug-processing chemicals in. Despite the heavy flow of these chemicals to Latin America in the 1980s, it has taken until now for Washington to put any export controls at all in place. And those that have been



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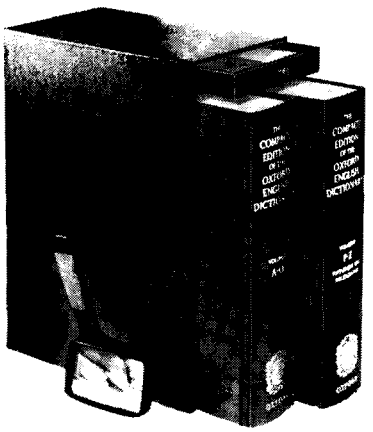

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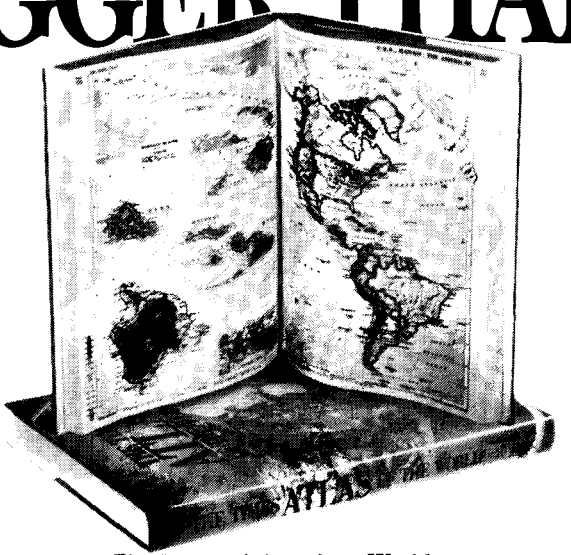

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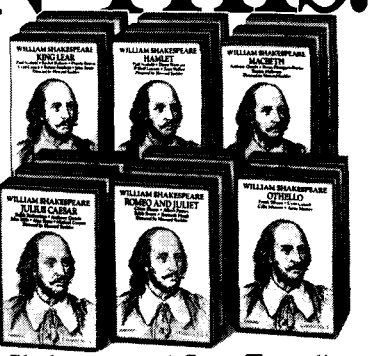

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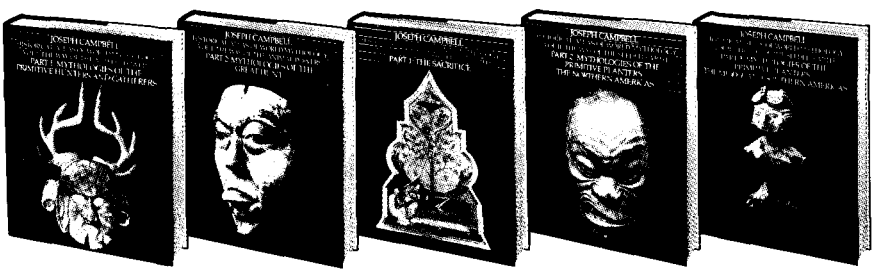

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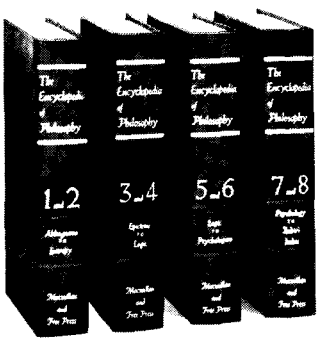


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implemented may be too weak and too late.

The Drug Enforcement Administration says the vast bulk of the key chemicals used to process cocaine comes from the United States. As cocaine imports have boomed in the 1980s, so have U.S. chemical exports to Latin America. A Central Intelligence Agency study last year reported that the amounts "far exceed those that would be associated with legitimate purposes . . ." According to the study, shipments to Latin America of the chemicals acetone, toluene, and methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) increased by about 125 percent between 1983 and 1986, while industrial activity in most of the region rose by a mere 15 percent or less, often much less.

A 1988 DEA study estimates that as much as 47 percent of the 10,000 tons of ether, acetone, and MEK shipped from the United States to Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador in 1987 went to produce cocaine. One chemical company's own internal investigation, the DEA says, revealed that about 40 percent of its ether exports were being illegally used for cocaine production.

A raid on a Colombian cocaine lab in May 1988 near the fabled drug city of Medellín discovered 154,000 gallons of ether and acetone—most of which had come from the United States. In a similar raid last February in Colombia, called "Operation Primavera," some of the confiscated chemicals were in containers clearly marked with the logos of U.S. manufacturers such as Dow Chemical and Union Chemical Company.

U.S. chemical producers have insisted they are concerned about the problem but note that they often don't know whose hands their products ultimately end up in or how they are used. Monitoring the problem, they emphasize, is difficult because their chemicals change hands many times during the distribution process. A few chemical exporters have seemed to want it that way. "The level of apathy and actual complicity on the part of [U.S.] businessmen has increased significantly," said Gene R. Haislip, a deputy assistant administrator for the DEA, before a House subcommittee on crime in the fall of 1987.

U.S.-supplied chemicals are also poisoning the environment. In Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley, laboratories hidden under the rain forest canopy use the chemicals to produce two-thirds of the world's supply of coca paste needed to process cocaine. The operators of these laboratories are not good corporate citizens. They dump millions of gallons of used chemicals each year in the valley's watershed. According to Buenaventura Marcelo, a professor at the National Agrarian University in Lima, more than 150 streams and rivers in the region "have literally been flooded, year after year, with vast quantities of toxic waste and pollution." A study prepared by the National Agrarian University estimates that in 1987 alone 15 million gallons of kerosene, eight million gallons of sulfuric acid, 1.6 million gallons of acetone, and 1.6 million gallons of solvent toluene were dumped. Government anti-narcotics forces often only add to the problem: when a jungle processing lab is raided, the confiscated precursor chemicals are sometimes simply dumped.

The U.S. Government's own intelligence reports clearly documented the severity of the problem at least as far back as the early 1980s. As one DEA investigation, called "Operation Steeple," reported in December 1981, "A major vulnerability to Colombia's traditional status in the world cocaine trafficking community is its dependence on the importation both of acetone and ether." The report went on to say that "if the Drug Enforcement Administration can successfully cut the availability of these precursor substances . . . the coca processing industry in Colombia could founder." Yet despite all the evidence, it has taken Washington this long to implement any chemical export regulations. One DEA official told me, "The No. 1 problem has been the law. There have been absolutely no controls on the flow of these chemicals. . . . It took Washington a long time to even realize the problem existed." The new export rules, which went fully into effect on November 1, require exporters of 20 key processing chemicals to notify the DEA and keep records of each shipment abroad. They must report any sales to new customers 15 days in advance, but no notification is required for established customers on record with the DEA.

Although these new controls may sound stiff—especially compared with the unregulated system of the past—in practice they mostly require exporters to maintain records they were often already keeping. The 15-day waiting period for a new customer to be approved has caused some businesses to grumble about potentially lost sales, but the chemical industry is generally happy with the law. After all, major industry organizations, such as the Chemical Manufacturers Association, helped shape the legislation. As one DEA official explained it, the new law is a "compromise solution" that is sensitive to the needs of maintaining legitimate business.

However, it is doubtful that these regulations can be truly enforced. Tracking the chemicals from producers to distributors to still other distributors to the customer is an enormous task. Funds and manpower are extremely limited for the massive paperwork and lengthy investigations that are necessary. As one chemical company spokesperson said, "[The DEA] may end up with rooms full of this information and nobody to look at it."

At an international drug enforcement conference in Miami last April, President Bush proclaimed that "whatever needs to be done, will be done" to stop the sales of chemicals. But his anti-narcotics strategy reflects other priorities. The vast majority of the new drug budget will fund such costly—and largely ineffective—programs as border interdiction and military assistance to drug-producing countries. Meanwhile, the flow of U.S. chemicals to Latin America's cocaine labs continues.

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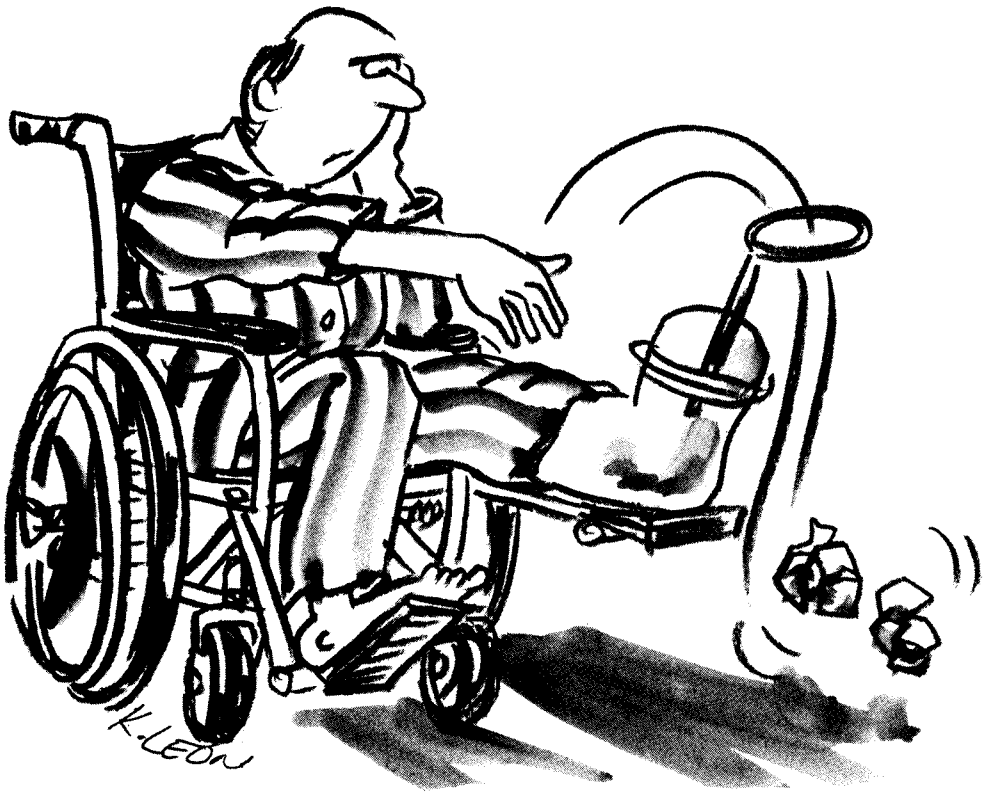


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**Reagan-san in Japan.**

# ONE HAND CLAPPING

*By Daniel Sneider*

TOKYO

Ronald Reagan, Nancy Reagan, her hairdresser Julius, chief arranger Charles Z. Wick, and the rest of the miniature imperial entourage that has relocated to California paid us a visit here in Japan recently. Or, more precisely, were paid to pay us a visit.

The $2 million "honorarium" the Reagans pocketed was big news back home. Some of my colleagues filed almost daily dispatches on the entire nine-day cavalcade. Network correspondents, for whom an assignment in Japan is television's Siberia, were commanding rare time on the evening news. And what, one may ask, was the reaction in Japan? The short answer is: not much. It's safe to say that any moderately well-informed American knows much more about what the Reagans did here than almost all Japanese. To misuse the old Zen riddle, the Japanese media's coverage of the Reagans was the sound of one hand clapping.

In this case, the hand doing the clapping belonged to the Fujisankei Communications Group, which reportedly invested a cool billion yen (about $7 million) in the Reagans. The company owns a major network, Fuji Television, and the *Sankei Shimbun*, the fifth-largest national daily newspaper. As far as the *Sankei Shimbun* was concerned, the Reagans were the biggest thing from LA to hit Japan since Michael Jackson opened his last world tour here. The former President was page-one news every day except one. ("Smart, magnificent political philosophy," read a low-key *Sankei* headline on a story about a Reagan banquet speech. A subhead quoted a banquet attendee chosen at random: "I'm impressed that he's still a big shot after retirement.")

The producers of the evening news on Fuji TV had the same excellent news judgment. Plus they got their own exclusives with the Reagans—a one-on-one interview with Reagan-san and a live appearance on a housewives' afternoon talk show for "Nan-shi fujin," which roughly translates as Mrs. Nancy. Lead question for Ronnie: "May I compliment you on your new hairstyle . . . ?" Opening query for the lady of the house: "How do you like your husband's new hairstyle?"

The rest of the Japanese media, however, reached the stunning conclusion that this was not a news event but a public relations stunt for their corporate competitors. In some cases the shutout was total. The *Asahi Shimbun*, the second-largest daily in Japan, devoted not one line to the Reagans. "Childish behavior," fumed a government official. (Ideologically, the two media groups are at opposite ends of the spectrum—the *Asahi* is Japan's most liberal major daily while the *Sankei* is by far the most conservative.)

For the government, Reagan's presence had one simple value. "He's a symbol of U.S.-Japan friendship, that's all," a Foreign Ministry official told reporters. The government hoped the nostalgia would be an antidote to the stories of "Japan-bashing" from Washington that the Japanese media so fiercely competes to report to the public. So government officials were less than pleased when even the "official" part of the trip got the same degree of non-coverage. The "official" schedule included a meeting with Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, on which Foreign Ministry officials briefed reporters in detail. This generated the most coverage of the trip. The *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the largest daily, gave it five paragraphs on page two the next morning. But it didn't rate a mention on any major evening news broadcast. Even NHK, the semi-public national network that covers the pronouncements and activities of every government ministry with a slavishness matched only by pre-*glasnost* Soviet TV, stiffed the meeting.

Not that Fujisankei got that big a boost from having this story all to itself. The television interview with Reagan, which aired at 11 p.m., garnered a 4.3 percent share of the audience (about 860,000 households). That was the lowest rating in the Fuji lineup that night—a samurai drama on at 8 p.m. got a 20.3 percent share. Why not put him on earlier? It was too much trouble to change the schedule, a Fuji TV official told me, and anyway the sponsors wouldn't like it. It was during that interview, by the way, that Reagan proffered his much reported opinion that Sony's purchase of Columbia Pictures might restore "decency and good taste" to Hollywood. The late-night TV fare airing at the same time as his interview regularly features topless ladies who parade around while guests sip scotch and tastefully discuss what size is ideal for a woman's breasts.

An editor of the *Yomiuri* gave an admittedly self-serving view of the lack of public interest. "Ronald Reagan is very popular here," he told me over dinner near the conclusion of the visit. "We think of him as a nice old friend. But instinctively, the Japanese people know that he has no influence anymore."

The Japanese media isn't much interested either in how much this faded symbol got for his services. Paying for bigwigs to visit Japan is something all the media groups do, for the prestige as well as the news value. While the Reagans were in town, the *Yomiuri* was sponsoring a gathering of Nobel laureates, including Andrei Sakharov, whose speeches and press conferences generated noticeably more coverage than Reagan's.

Reagan isn't the first former U.S. President to hire himself out to a Japanese company, although his hourly rate was certainly higher. Kansai Television, the flag-



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ship affiliate of Fuji based in Osaka, Japan's second-largest city, is a pioneer in the rent-a-Prez business. The Fords were the star attraction at the 1979 celebration of the station's 20th anniversary. That went so well, the station bought another Presidential visit, this time by Jimmy Carter, in 1981. The Carters also have a friend in the YKK Company, the Japanese zipper-maker that has a major factory in Georgia; YKK has paid for several Carter visits here. Kansai TV went for a double play in the early 1980s, bringing Ford back together with Henry Kissinger. The usual array of television talk shows and audiences with government leaders was laid on. A State Department official who was serving in Japan at the time recalls that because Betty Ford didn't come along, "Ford had to do the housewife shows."

Fujisankei was not the only company bidding for the Reagan visit. According to a Foreign Ministry official, the Shuwa Corporation, a real estate developer active in the United States, and a supermarket chain also offered presumably hefty fees. Of the three, the official says, Fujisankei was the "most respectable." (But even this official was under the impression that the $2 million was going to the Reagan Presidential library, not into Nancy's closet.)

Actually the invitation to Reagan was first conveyed by the Japanese government, at the Toronto summit before the President left office. But the government has little to offer beyond free airfare and hotel rooms for a party of six. The Reagans evidently waited till someone came along who could pay Julius's way as well.

The Foreign Ministry was left struggling to make sure the visit did not end up entirely as the private property of Fujisankei. "We wanted Ronald Reagan to have the widest exposure possible," said Yukio Okamoto, the official in charge of the arrangements for the visit. The ministry's initial gambit was to ask Reagan to hold a press conference, hoping to generate more coverage. Fujisankei didn't mind the extra publicity. But the Reagan entourage, carrying on a fine tradition, refused.

A bright Foreign Ministry official came up with the next best thing: have Reagan throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Japan Series, the professional baseball championship that commands a huge following here. The ministry thought it would make nice symmetry with Prime Minister Kaifu's appearance at the Red Sox game where he also threw out the first ball.

But the government's attempt to wrest away even temporary control from Fujisankei almost failed. Fujisankei officials were apoplectic when they heard the idea. The ballgame was taking place at the home stadium of the Central League champs, the Tokyo Giants. The team is officially known as the Yomiuri Giants, named, as all pro teams here are named, after the company that owns it—in this case none other than the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

RONALD REAGAN BY TAYLOR JONES FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This meant that Reagan would be shown as well on the *Yomiuri*'s national television network, Nippon TV, which broadcasts the Giants' games. Fujisankei officials objected even to the idea that he be greeted by—and photographed with—the three top corporate officials of the *Yomiuri*, who hold similar positions with the ballclub. Fujisankei officials accused the Foreign Ministry of being nothing less than "*Yomiuri* agents." The ministry threatened to cancel the plan, call a press conference, and tell the rest of the media why they were doing it. Fujisankei finally gave in, but only on the condition that the company name be mentioned in the stadium introduction ("Ronald Reagan, brought to you by . . .")

The nice old man with the funny haircut finally made his pitch—actually two pitches, because the first ended up behind the back of the batter standing ceremonially at the plate. It turned out to be the only time most Japanese even knew Reagan was here.

DANIEL SNEIDER is the Tokyo correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*.



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**The fulfillment of 1956, but with a difference.**

# HUNGARY'S QUIET REVOLUTION

*By Jacques Rupnik*

BUDAPEST

Thirty-three years after the murdered revolution of 1956, Hungary has reclaimed its democratic legacy. Speaking from the same balcony where, on October 23, 1956, Prime Minister Imre Nagy launched Hungary's extraordinary two-week insurrection against the Stalinist legacy, Matyas Szuros, the president of the Hungarian parliament, proclaimed, on October 23, 1989, that Hungary is to become "an independent, democratic, legal state"—the Republic of Hungary, no longer the "Hungarian People's Republic."

On the eve of the October 23 anniversary, parliament legalized opposition parties in anticipation of the first free elections since 1945, due to be held next spring. Meanwhile, the Communist Party renamed itself "Socialist" and adopted a statement condemning the 1956 Soviet invasion, saying: "No power has the right to crush the social and political aspirations of a nation."

These are only the latest and most dramatic steps in the continuing dismemberment of communism on the Danube. Censorship has been abolished and a free press has emerged. Radio Free Europe has opened a bureau in Budapest. A new stock market heralds the return of free enterprise. The 60,000-strong "workers' militia," a Communist army established in the aftermath of 1956, has been disbanded. Even the red stars on public buildings are no longer lit. The 90-foot statue of Lenin next to Heroes Square was carted away in June—officially for renovation, in fact to avoid provoking the quarter million people who gathered there to commemorate Imre Nagy and other victims of the post-1956 repression. A committee convened by the mayor of Budapest has since decided that for "aesthetic" reasons, it will be kept in storage permanently. After more than 40 years of Soviet-style communism, Hungary is saying its long goodbye to Lenin.

For all practical purposes this is a revolution. Yet it is by no means a remake of 1956. The difference is that Hungarians do not have to fear a Soviet invasion. Mikhail Gorbachev is busy withdrawing troops from Eastern Europe; invasion is the farthest thing from his mind. In the words of Hungary's prime minister, Miklos Nemeth: "This time our hands are not tied down."

The protagonists of Hungary's quiet revolution are also very different from their predecessors of the Nagy era. They do not want a repeat of the bloody suppression of the 1956 revolution, with its 20,000 dead and 200,000 exiled. Today Hungarians feel a link to the revolutionaries of 1956, but they are wary of the revolutionary myth of a sudden and radical break with the past, and they appreciate the virtues of national unity. Their solution is the gradual rediscovery of democratic politics. What makes the current peaceful transition to post-communism possible is that the Party is acting the part of willing victim, that the oppositionists are democrats rather than revolutionaries, and that society is behaving more like a *spectateur engagé*—a committed observer—than an unbridled force.

The scope of the new freedom is virtually unprecedented in post-1918 Hungary. To some extent, the retreat of the Party is the result of economic failure and of rising democratic aspirations among the people. Yet it would be a mistake to attribute the spectacular changes currently under way simply to these social pressures. Unlike in Poland, the floodgates in Hungary were opened from above. The novelty of the Hungarian paradigm is that the Communist Party has been able to adapt to and sometimes anticipate change—even at the cost of abandoning the essential tenets of contemporary communism.

"The history of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party [HSWP] as a state-party is over," said the statement voted in October at the ruling Party's 14th and final congress. But suicide was promptly followed by resurrection when 1,005 out of 1,202 delegates voted to reconstitute themselves as the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP). Many in Budapest wondered whether this was not merely new paint on an old facade. After all, this was the fourth time in its history that the Hungarian Communist Party has changed its name. Hence the emphatically reassuring words of the born-again Socialists:

> The new party is determined to face the past of its predecessor with relentless sincerity. The Hungarian Socialist Party disassociates itself from the sins and the mistaken principles or methods of the HSWP. The Hungarian So-

JACQUES RUPNIK is the author of a documentary series on Eastern Europe for Britain's Channel Four and of *The Other Europe*, to be published this month by Schocken Books.



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cialist Party is determined to break with the bureaucratic system of the Party-state and also with the principle of democratic centralism. At the same time, the new party considers itself the successor of the reformist aims that existed within the HSWP. The HSP fully endorses the universal values of human development, freedom, democracy and the respect for productive work.

With this segue from the sublime to the ridiculous, the new ruling party seemed still to hesitate between continuity and change, wavering between linking itself to the past and embracing the future.

Given that 80 percent of the Communist delegates had obediently voted for the makeover, I asked Imre Pozsgay, the moving spirit of the new Socialist Party, whether such an overwhelming victory might not detract from the credibility of the radical reformers. "You cannot at the same time proclaim your commitment to democracy and openness while practicing excommunication," he said. "One can, however, require that those with blood on their hands and those who have abused their positions of power for illicit material gains be excluded from membership. An ethics committee will have to decide on such cases. But how can one simply forbid former Communists from joining the new party?"

In fact, Pozsgay himself is the best advertisement for the new party's claim that Communists can change their stripes. He joined the Party at the height of the Stalinist era. After a career in the provincial apparatus he was made minister of culture by Gyorgy Agzel, who was for 30 years the chief ideologist of the Janos Kadar regime. Yet Pozsgay became the main architect of change from within. Demoted in 1982 to head of the Patriotic Front, a largely meaningless Communist-controlled umbrella organization, he used the opportunity to build strong ties with emerging interest groups, including economic experts and intellectuals thinking about alternatives for the post-Kadar era. His peasant origins (and looks) helped his popularity. Bright and early on the morning after the Party congress's 2 a.m. adjournment, Pozsgay gave me a strikingly articulate assessment of the prospects for a democratic transition. Next to Pozsgay, a Gorbachev or even a Dubček sounds like the voice of Communist orthodoxy. Sometimes, when our interpreter had a bit of trouble, Pazsgay switched to fluent Russian. Listening to the putative next president of Hungary discuss the dismantling of communism in Russian was enough to make me start believing it'll actually happen.

Compromises had to be made at the congress, but a clear majority did endorse breaking with the basic tenets of Leninism. Democratic centralism—the dictum that the Party apparat knows best—is abolished. So is the Party's claim to a "leading role"—that is, a monopoly of political power. The Hungarian government of the not-too-distant future, Pozsgay told me, is likely to be a coalition: "We need a government of national unity, a strong government of pluralism and democratic principles by the new Socialist Party." And he added emphatically: "The endorsement of pluralism and democratic principles by the Socialist Party entails the risk of losing—of being voted out of power."

In view of what happened in Poland last June and of the latest opinion surveys published in Budapest, this is by no means a merely theoretical risk. Current polls show the Communists' political offspring attracting no more than a quarter of the vote. And since the Party congress at which Communists became Socialists, only about 20,000 people have enrolled in the new party. The whereabouts of the other 680,000 members of the former Communist Party are a mystery. Some may be waiting for the Leninist banner to be unfurled elsewhere. Others may go over to the opposition, or abandon politics altogether. Still others may have decided that in the Hungary of the near future a Party card will no longer be a kind of American Express card, providing access to privileges, jobs, and material benefits—and that it is therefore safe to leave home without one.

So why, I asked Pozsgay, has he embarked on such a risky course? "Because there is no other way," he said. "Old-style Communist principles have led to a dead end in Eastern Europe wherever they were tried." What then, I asked, are the main difficulties in a democratic transition? "The main difficulty," Pozsgay replied, "is a peaceful dismantling of the old structures of the Party-state. We've achieved a major step in that direction by changing the Party. The second task is instituting the rule of law, which will provide a new framework for relations between state and society. Then we must build the consensus necessary for the introduction of change, and I hope the Parliament will endorse the measures agreed at the round table with the opposition. But the greatest difficulty comes from the depth of our economic crisis. The most urgent task is to create the conditions for the development of a market economy. Finally, we need a favorable international environment. *Perestroika* in the Soviet Union and improved East-West relations create conditions for change and for the assertion of Hungarian sovereignty."

The old guard at the congress was out of sorts. Janos Berecz, the leader of the conservative faction of the old Party, asked plaintively if there would be room in the new party for "reform Communists"—a reminder that the word "reform" has been abused to the point of becoming meaningless. Karoly Grosz, the general secretary of the old Party, left the congress meeting hall in disgust, saying, "Only in American Westerns can the hero shoot at his enemies without interruption. I've got to reload my guns." The two attitudes illustrate the dilemma of the old-timers. Should they join the new party, hoping eventually to regain control, or should they bolt and try to preserve their Communist identity? And which choice gives them a better chance to preserve their Communist privileges?

The broader question is who owns the Party, and beyond that, whether the Party still owns the state. Pressed by the opposition, Minister of Finance Laszlo Bekesi recently revealed that the Party owns 2,884 buildings and has received some 56 billion forints, a



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substantial portion of the state budget, over the past 20 years. Clearly, a separation of Party and state is essential if democratic change is to have a chance.

Kalman Kulczar, currently the minister of justice, speaks with conviction and without jargon of the challenge of creating democratic institutions almost from scratch. He identifies three main sources of inspiration: the *Comitats*, the Hungarian tradition of self-government going back to the Middle Ages; the *Rechtstaat*, the rule of law as practiced in pre-1918 Austria-Hungary; and Western models of liberal democracy. "We were the first in Central Europe to translate Montesquieu and Tocqueville," he told me. "Today we would like to design democratic institutions combining the separation of powers and the 'checks and balances' as in America, a French-style presidency to ensure stability, and the West German electoral system, which seems to us the most democratic in its concern for representation of minorities." In other words, Hungary is choosing its democratic dinner from an à la carte menu.

It is tempting to compare the Hungarian transition to democracy and the Spanish model of the middle and late 1970s. The last years of the Kadar era did bear some resemblance to the benign authoritarianism of Franco's decaying dictatorship. Imre Pozsgay plays the part of Prince Juan Carlos in this comparison. He is a reassuring symbol of continuity in the midst of radical change. Liberal-minded economic experts with links to the old establishment and the new entrepreneurial class provide a technocratic elite for the transition, much as the new bourgeois elites associated with Opus Dei did in Spain. The opposition parties also figure in this analogy, emerging from underground in much the same way the Spanish exiles did once it was safe to come out. And as in Spain, the Hungarian oppositionists—moderate in style, radically democratic in substance—are playing a vital role in the reinvention of democracy. Within a year they have created a landscape of autonomous associations, periodicals, and parties—in short, a civil society.

The political parties of post-Communist Hungary are an unusual mixture of old parties that have been banned for more than 40 years and new parties that are the heirs of the dissident movement and the democratic opposition of the last decade. The oldest parties, the Smallholders party and the Social Democrats, have been resurrected by many of the same leaders who ran them before 1947—the average age of the leadership is somewhere around 80. This is irksome for the youthful membership of these parties, but so far the veterans are holding tight the reins of "power." The Social Democrats' gerontocracy has rid itself of Mihaly Bihary, the astute and highly respected dean of the Law School at Budapest University, who is in his 40s and who had hoped to become the party's leader. In similar style, the Smallholders, led by Tobor Partay, 85, purged Ivan Baba, a young and talented academic and journalist who had aspired to turn the old agrarian party into a more liberal grouping of the new Hungarian middle classes.

Baba is now the editor of *Datum*, the first privately-owned daily in Hungary. A group of computer whiz kids who made millions of forints designing software and importing hardware invested in what was at first a regional paper for the southern counties of Hungary. In June it became a national daily. Its aim is to serve as the nucleus of a future liberal party.

The more important opposition parties are the newer ones: the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Democratic Forum. Interestingly, they are separated by the oldest divide in Hungarian political culture: urban democratic Westernizers versus nationally-minded populists. The Free Democrats are the product of the dissident and samizdat activities of the last decade. They are Western-style liberals—a future bourgeois democratic party for the professional and intellectual classes. Led by philosophers such as Janos Kis and Gaspar Miklos Tamas, the Free Democrats include prominent writers such as Gyorgy Konrad and Miklos Haraszti. Their 80-page political program, published last spring, was noted for its depth and brilliance. But it did not reach a large public, and it has been ruthlessly plundered by their political rivals. Still, it identified themes that seem to be winning them growing popularity.

On the campaign trail with the Free Democrats recently, I witnessed the amazing spectacle of democratic politics returning to the countryside. As the caravan of some 60 cars festooned with banners and posters stopped in small towns and villages, people looked bewildered at first. But soon most of them were giving an enthusiastic welcome to the first political campaign to come to town since 1947. Bearded intellectuals from Budapest collected signatures from rough-hewn peasants who looked like they had stepped out of an old woodcut.

The Free Democrats' program included advocating a constitutional referendum to forestall the presidential election that had been scheduled for November 26. Instead, they would establish a weak West German-style presidency whose occupant would be chosen by parliament. The immediate aim is to prevent the election of Pozsgay, who currently looks unbeatable. To cede a strong independent executive to the Communists, the Free Democrats have been arguing, will allow Party apparatchiks to cash in on their waning power, transforming themselves into "entrepreneurs" by becoming general managers of newly privatized state companies and buying shares at ridiculously low prices. The Free Democrats did in fact collect over 200,000 signatures, more than the required number. But most observers expected the presidential election to go forth as scheduled, on the grounds that the petitions were too late.

On the night of October 31, however, parliament stunned the nation by voting to have the referendum the Free Democrats have been demanding. Instead of electing a president on November 26, therefore, Hungarian voters will vote that day on whether to have a directly elected president at all. If they vote "yes," the presidential election will take place on January 7.



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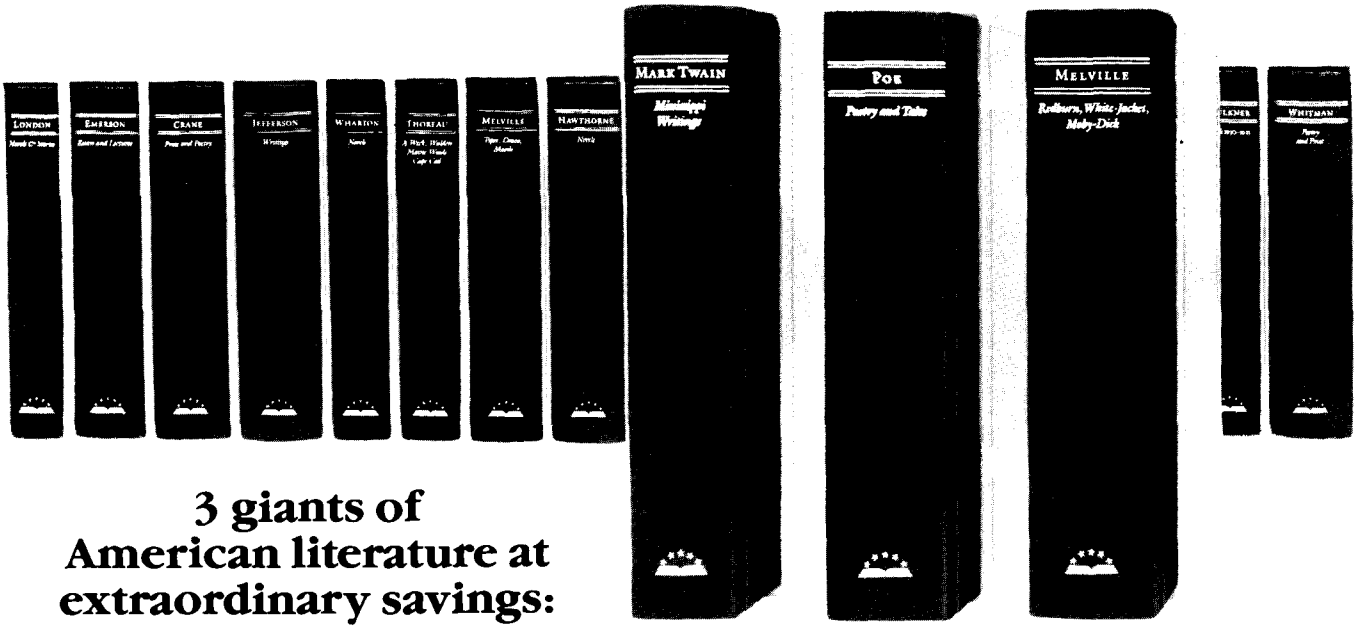


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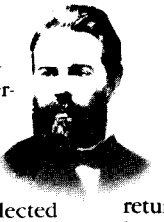

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★★★

This extraordinary turnabout has introduced all kinds of new uncertainties. The Free Democrats will now be in the position of trying to convince Hungarians that the direct popular election of a president is not necessarily sound democratic practice, and that while a strong, independent, elected presidency is good for France and America, it is not necessarily good for Hungary. Both propositions will be a difficult sell. If the strong presidency is voted down on November 26, Pozsgay's fate would be left to the vicissitudes of parliamentary politics. Even if the "yes" vote prevails, however, he will not be out of the woods. Delaying the election until January would give a rival candidate time to emerge.

When I asked Pozsgay a few weeks ago if there was anyone who might present a serious threat to him, he said, half-jokingly, "Otto von Hapsburg." Today he may no longer find the joke so funny. Von Hapsburg, the heir to the old Austro-Hungarian royal family, represents the West German Christian Democrats in the European Parliament in Brussels. But he was born in Hungary, speaks fluent Hungarian, and arguably is a Hungarian citizen. He is also very popular. After the decision to have the referendum, he told reporters he had no intention of running for anything in Hungary. But he added that if the situation required, or if he could be of help, then . . . (A von Hapsburg victory, by the way, would complete the analogy to Spain, where the restoration of the Bourbons, paradoxically, was a step on the road to democracy.)

The referendum on the presidency has a bizarre feature added to give the "yes" side a boost. As a rider, those who vote for the strong presidency will also be voting to restore the old Hungarian coat of arms, which is surmounted with a crown. The old coat of arms has enormous emotional valence in Hungary, and during the referendum campaign the Pozsgay forces are sure to wrap themselves in it in much the same way George Bush wrapped himself in the American flag last year.

Whatever happens, it's clear that the situation has been destabilized. In Poland, Solidarity went along with the election of Wojciech Jaruzelski to the presidency as a way of smoothing the transition from the Communist ancien régime by preventing an authoritarian backlash. Many Hungarian oppositionists have been willing to view the prospective election of Pozsgay in a similar light. And while Pozsgay may still end up in the presidential chair after all the voting and maneuvering is over, these latest developments carry with them some real dangers of instability and reaction.

On the issue of the Communist bourgeoisie, oppositionists disagree among themselves on how important it is, in the long run, to prevent apparatchiks from setting themselves up in business. The Democratic Forum oscillates between moral indignation and pragmatism: if insider trading, Eastern European-style, is the *nomenklatura*'s price for accepting a market economy, many say: so be it. And even if the old Party hacks start out with the lion's share of the stock certificates, they will still have to compete in the marketplace—an activity for which their training and habits of mind have not noticeably prepared them.

One deep divide between the Free Democrats and the Democratic Forum is the national question. The Forum is heir to the Hungarian tradition of populist nationalism. Its leaders believe that Hungary should not imitate the Western model but should seek a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. They also suggest that the (often Jewish) intellectuals in the Free Democrats' leadership do not show sufficient concern for the fate of Hungarian minorities in neighboring Romania and Czechoslovakia. In these differences, muted for the moment, one can see the ingredients of a potentially ugly clash.

These old divisions do not define the terms of political debate in Hungary, at least not yet. An independent newsstand in the Budapest subway features three main items: the program of the Alliance of Free Democrats; porn magazines; and reprints of old maps of greater Hungary that include Slovakia and Croatia. The common denominator is that all were taboo until very recently. One survey suggests that the differences within each party are as profound as the divisions between parties. "The parties," says Gaspar Miklos Tamas, "are still 'tribes' where the bonds of loyalty because of shared experience are more important than new ideological or political divides."

Ultimately, the key to a democratic politics is neither the post-Communist reformers nor the opposition but Hungarian society itself. In contrast to Poland, where change is driven by a powerful social movement, Solidarity, Hungarian society is remarkably passive considering the ferment all around. Paternalism and infantilism, the complementary attitudes characteristic of the Kadar era, have been replaced by a generalized mistrust of all institutions—including the opposition parties. Only 38 percent of people polled have confidence in the government, but no more than that trust the new opposition parties. This skepticism connects with the economic hardship of everyday life. The director of one of Hungary's two television networks says that after an initial period of elation, viewership of political debates on TV is declining. The average Hungarian worker, after a 12- or 14-hour day (one shift in the state sector, one in the private), would rather watch music videos.

The sociologist Elemer Hankis says that the Hungarians' lack of passion for politics is connected to a "lack of confidence in themselves, in their capacity to influence developments." The criteria by which change is measured are themselves changing. A few years ago Hungarians were content to feel better off economically and politically than their East bloc neighbors. Today they measure their situation by Austrian or West German standards. And by this measure, they realize, they have a long way to go. So while the political elites, reformist or oppositionist, discover the thrill of democratic politics, the society as a whole remains a skeptical bystander in what it experiences as a drift—not a charge—into the post-Communist future. •



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# RICH COUNTRY, POOR COUNTRY

*By David Landes*

In the beginning there was Smith, and Smith told us not to worry about economic growth. Left alone, people would sort things out, do what they do best, make appropriate choices to maximize return. The market would take care of the rest, rewarding reason and quickness and knowledge and punishing the opposite. All of this, moreover, would work to the general advantage, augmenting wealth and leading nations through a natural progression of stages from agriculture to industry to commerce. Long live the invisible hand!

For more than a century and a half following Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (another good reason to remember the year 1776), this confidence in the inevitability of material progress prevailed. It was one of the unspoken assumptions of a world caught in the wonder of science. There were, to be sure, places, times, and voices of discouragement. Malthus and Ricardo warned of limits on growth, of overpopulation and the "stationary state." It was not for nothing that economics was called the dismal science. But with the passage of time and the diffusion of new technologies through Europe and European offshoots overseas, such perils were seen as so remote and hypothetical as to be safely ignored.

Even the naysayers and rebels were caught up in the larger mood of optimism. There were no stronger believers in progress, for example, than the socialists, especially Karl Marx, Epigoni & Company, who proclaimed themselves scientific the better to color the religious character of their belief system. Even the most backward and poorest societies in the world would be swept up by the march of progress thanks to the intrusion of the front-runners. Marx deplored the abuses of imperialism, but he saw it as "objectively" progressive. In an oft-quoted passage on the British conquest of India, he noted that India had been conquered repeatedly by foreign masters, each of whom had simply renewed the plunder and exploitation of old. With the British, at least, India would be wrenched out of the changelessness of what he called the Asiatic mode of production and compelled into a process of modernization. British greed would make it so.

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Two generations more of colonial experience were sufficient to disabuse socialists (and other observers) of this innocence. For one thing, the economic programs of imperialist nations were aimed at promoting the interests of the home country. They might also favor the development of their colonies—indeed, they usually did—but this was a byproduct and in any event a very different kind of development from that at home. For another, abuses and left-liberal politics made imperialism a dirty word. The South African ("Boer") war and the scandal of Belgian rule in the Congo provided material for outrage and votes. (The only damper on this combination of moral condemnation and political opposition was the awareness that the colonies sustained in various ways the jobs and wages of the proletariat at home, which is where all political charity begins. That is why the French Communist Party was long indifferent if not hostile to the movement for Algerian independence.)

This revision of Marx's (and Engels's) primitive optimism did not, however, signal abandonment of a fundamental confidence in the inevitability of progress. It simply meant that this progress, like socialism, would have to await the collapse of capitalist oppression. Liberation at home would be accompanied by liberation abroad, for obviously there could be no such thing as socialist imperialism. On the contrary, imperialism was a specific characteristic of capitalism, its "highest stage," to quote Lenin. And when freedom came, as it surely would and as it did after World War II, it would be followed by material development as the night the day.

This optimism was not confined to the political left. Center and right, it was the same. Two schools of thought held the field. Neoclassical economists saw no reason why the classical market mechanisms should not enable newly developing countries to follow the example of their industrialized precursors. One oft-cited model was the so-called staples theory or "vent for surplus": a country exports staples, usually primary products such as field crops or minerals; and the earnings will finance more balanced growth, in industry as well as in agriculture or mining.

This doctrine had been developed initially to explain Canada's path to high product and high income. The gains from a succession of export staples (furs in the



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17th and 18th centuries, then timber in the late-18th and 19th, then grain and minerals in the 19th and 20th) had drawn people and capital and generated the earnings to make possible balanced growth in all sectors. It was subsequently applied to Australia (wool, meat, wheat, minerals), the United States (tobacco, cotton, wheat, minerals), and Sweden (timber, iron ore and semifinished bar iron, copper)—all of whom had done very well. And it could with equal plausibility be made to account for the transition of medieval England from a dependent primary producer (minerals and wool) to Europe's leading industrial nation.

The second school of thought has come to be known as development economics. The gist of this approach is that no one can afford to wait while natural market forces work their allegedly beneficent effects. They take too long, and they too often produce specialized economies that may follow their comparative advantage but are fearfully unbalanced and vulnerable to price shocks and the maneuvers of stronger trading partners. Witness the misfortunes of banana, cocoa, coffee, and other one- or two-crop republics. Even oil producers are not immune. If a country, then, wants to have a truly modern economy, versatile and technologically up to date, it has to go about it deliberately. It has to set goals, plan and facilitate action, control decisions, and manage performance.

This approach owed much to the state planning tradition developed by the Soviets, which still enjoyed prestige in the first postwar decades, but it was also readily compatible with the Keynesian economics that had been cultivated in free market countries struggling to pull out of the Great Depression. And it enjoyed the sanction of historical experience: as Alexander Gerschenkron argued in a seminal article of 1951, you don't have to be socialist to need the state. All the so-called follower countries, those European nations and offshoots that emulated the British Industrial Revolution, had to take special measures to catch up. They needed larger investments in capital for later vintages of equipment and plants, and they had to train their workers to a new discipline and higher technical standards.

The earliest followers, such as France, Belgium, Germany, and the United States, had been able to do this in large part with private resources, although the state did intervene to assist the costliest ventures. They had a long experience of their own in trade and industry, and their businessmen and property owners had accumulated sufficient capital to meet the needs of modernization.

Even so, it took special institutions to mobilize this wealth, and Gerschenkron, following an old tradition, stressed the role of so-called development banks as movers and facilitators of industrialization. Later developers, however, were too poor to do as much, and the state had to step in. Gerschenkron, a specialist in European and especially Russian economic history, took his example from czarist Russia and then the Soviet Union, beginning with Peter the Great and going up to the five-year plans of the 1930s, and emphasized the strain and cruelty of such efforts, which characteristically took the form of intense "spurts" followed by indispensable periods of respite. It should be noted here that Gerschenkron was in effect continuing the optimistic tradition that development is there to be had, so long as one uses a proper strategy. One has to mobilize capital and use it wisely; one has to acquire knowledge and know-how. But these are within reach and increasingly efficacious. Technology improves; knowledge advances. What's more, the late developer has the advantage of hindsight, which is always the best kind.

By this logic, the opportunity and potential gains of the leap to modernity increase over time: it pays to be late. The latecomers grow faster and maybe better than their predecessors: they buy state-of-the-art equipment; they move into heavy industry (in those days, coal and steel were the summum bonum of industrial capability). Gerschenkron took as his special examples Germany in the mid- and late-19th century and late-19th-century czarist Russia. Russia, Gerschenkron maintained, coming later, installed bigger and better equipment even than that used in German metallurgy. (He was wrong about that.)

He recognized that not every society is ready to make this leap: it takes awareness and preparation, in particular the liberation of productive energies held in check by bad institutions (in the Russian case, serfdom). In that regard he was at one with just about the entire economics profession, going all the way back to Adam Smith, who offers us among other things fascinating comments on the deleterious effect of bad political and social arrangements on Chinese economic performance. The leap might also require the mobilization of enthusiasm. This is the role of ideology.

In general the decades of the 1950s and '60s were sanguine years, marked by unprecedented rates of growth, a spectacular expansion of international trade, and an optimistic consensus, for different reasons, about the prospects of global economic development. And how could it not be so, since colonies were now free, and all that was needed was money and know-how? It was in this context that Walt Rostow brought out his *Stages of Economic Growth*, an almost biological model of development that envisaged a whole world maturing into a state of high consumption.

We have been disappointed since. Every year the World Bank publishes its "basic indicators"—statistics on economic and social performance of countries around the world. They are a record of success, but also of failure to the point of despair. They show the effects of natural and man-made disasters, of two oil shocks, of wars and revolutions, of freedom turned into political oppression. They show growth slowing even among the leaders, show some countries going backward while others limp in their aborted or interrupted flight; they testify to widespread famine and poverty, to a growing gap between rich and poor. One should not be systematically pessimistic, especially when some gains give reason



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for real satisfaction. Look at the life expectancy data. Or the growth rates of the quick economies of East Asia. Even so, the success of some merely highlights the failure of others. Africa is a heartbreaker. In sum, the easy confidence is gone. Economic development is not to be taken for granted. It is a hard business.

The failure of ambitious development programs in many Third World countries has inevitably led to a search for explanations. These typically fit the paradigm, in which we saw growth as natural and stagnation as an effect of non-economic interference and exploitation. Mainstream economists have had a field day denouncing the mismanagement and corruption of government planners and managers; the radicals have found their villain in capitalist greed. To be sure, formal colonialism has largely vanished, but it is argued that unequal economic ties and domination have survived the dissolution of political bonds. A copious and ferociously sectarian literature flourishes, much of it coming from a disappointed and frustrated Latin America, to explain this new "highest stage." This literature of neocolonialism, *dependencia*, unequal trade, and underdeveloping the developing countries has proved far more influential than the neoclassical market arguments about political incompetence—partly because neoclassical conservatives come across as scolds, partly because it is a lot easier for Third World countries to blame their ills on the outside than to look in the mirror.

Both these approaches, it should be noted, have maintained the paradigm. Both have assumed that development is natural, hence intrinsically easy; just give it a chance. The free marketeers take for granted that growth will bring about division of labor and specialization, with feedback gains in an upward cycle. And the planners assume that wanting and thinking can make it so. The material ingredients are all that is needed: land (resources), labor (bodies), and capital (money).

This has also been the position of the development planners and doers. These are variously economists, bankers, bureaucrats in national and international agencies, employees of philanthropic foundations. Their task is to make good things happen by injecting the ingredients. Put in money and ideas, send in technicians and designers, and the growth will take care of itself. For such doers, the classical paradigm is congenial as well as persuasive, for it assumes the homogeneity and sufficiency of these ingredients. Even labor: people may seem different, but for economists and people-movers, they are at bottom the same. They are rational optimizers and maximizers trying to get the most for the least, hence responsive to the right signals and opportunities; or they are like putty (economics jargon), made to be shaped at will. Even the most highly skilled or educated are in effect ready to hand because they can be hired, from elsewhere if necessary. Hence the expected efficacy of economic cookery.

In the period since the War, however, in addition to nagging and recurrent disappointment, two things have happened to shake these assumptions. One has been the "discovery" of the "residual" in the 1950s. This is the term economists have assigned to that part of growth apparently not accounted for by the conventional factors noted above. The very fact that these did not "explain" just about all of growth was in itself a big surprise, since the the conventional models (production functions) assumed an identity: growth was made up of, hence was, increase of land, labor, and capital. But even more surprising was the size of the unexplained category: on the basis of statistics drawn from national accounts (in itself a new branch of economics), the residual appeared to represent half or more of the growth of advanced economies in the modern period.

The first reaction of economists to the residual was to try to identify it. It was called technology, which seemed a reasonable explanation for productivity gains that increased product beyond what the conventional factors could account for. To be sure, technology is in itself a product of many inputs, in particular, of knowledge, skills, and enterprise. There remained the task, then, of explaining advances in technology—not only the invention of new ways of doing things but also their diffusion and application. Here the most popular line of analysis was to represent technological change as a response to growth and investment. Fast growth, for example, normally requires new equipment embodying more productive techniques. Another line emphasized changes in relative prices of the conventional factors. These will often enhance the reward to technological solutions: if labor gets more expensive, for example, perhaps because of a successful strike, it becomes that much more advantageous to build a machine to take its place. In this way, technology was tamed for economics—reduced to a buyable commodity available on demand as a response to needs and opportunities.

For some economists, though, the emphasis on technology seemed excessive. The problem, they felt, was not in the reality but in the counting. Why not shrink the residual? To do this, the conventional factors of production had to be redefined so as to take account of changes in quality as well as quantity. They were not homogeneous. They embodied improvements: labor became better educated and trained; machines got smarter; new raw materials worked better than old. If one weighted these factors for quality, one did reduce the residual by more than half, although it was not clear whether this was not simply a new bookkeeping convention.

In the meantime, the emphasis on quality and the abandonment of the homogeneity assumption necessarily raised the question of the human factor. If people are different . . . well, that makes the story of growth very different.

The issue came to the fore with the growing awareness of the spectacular rise of the Japanese economy to industrial pre-eminence, especially in some of the most advanced branches of manufacture. This was an achievement that no one would have dared predict in the aftermath of World War II. The Japanese economy



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was then in ruins, and the loss of empire left the country with little in the way of industrial raw materials. The prospect of recovery seemed small enough; the notion that Japan would soon compete successfully, even dominate, in such heavy industries as steel and motor vehicles was inconceivable.

Japan's performance since then has given rise to a new industry: that of explaining Japanese success. A small library of books and articles, some of them best sellers, have proposed to tell us the secret. For some, it lies in the venerable virtues: a high savings rate (thrift), hard work, good planning. For others, these are in themselves the manifestations of deeper characteristics of Japanese society and culture: the Japanese are different.

Over these same years, moreover, we have seen similar instances of ultrarapid growth elsewhere in East Asia—in Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, the so-called little dragons—which raises similar questions about them and about East Asian societies in general. For a while, there was talk of rice-bowl cultures. My own preference was to speak of chopstick cultures, because I could see a direct link between the skills necessary to eat with chopsticks and to work with tweezers and similar implements at the fine tasks required by modern electronics manufacture. Some scholars are talking these days about Confucian culture. The assumption is that if all of this is happening in the same part of the world, an area that shares certain cultural characteristics, we ought to be able to find some common feature or features that have contributed to this result.

So we have looked, and it is clear that most efforts to understand and explain these developments include the human factor. What is more, by including attitudinal and cultural elements as well as levels of education and professional formation, these explanations introduce variables that are not only hard to measure, hence uncongenial to economists and planners, but hard to change and even harder to transfer. (Our individualistic Western societies, for example, may not be ready to emulate Japanese patterns of collective behavior, even in the glorious cause of industrial supremacy.) And this is indeed a major change in our intellectual apprehension of the process of development.

This brings me back to the problem of those Third World countries that have not done well. We have seen that the initial, conventional reactions to their and our disappointment have been to blame it on politics and power. And there is clearly much truth in that. But here too there has been an increased willingness to look at the influence of social and cultural variables. Not so much, of course, as with the high-growth countries. If one wants to impute success to such factors, no feelings will be hurt. But to attribute failure even in part to human shortcomings can be wounding. Some would say that such characterizations are intrinsically racist. And coming from the outside, from those who have "made it," they will almost inevitably smack of condescension—no way to phrase this sort of thing tactfully.

Even so, there is an implicit recognition of the human problem on the part of growing numbers of people in the less developed countries. It takes the form, interestingly enough, not of an effort to transform social structures and cultural patterns in the pursuit of modernization, but the reverse—a deliberate rejection of the values associated with industrialism, consumerism, and all the other preconditions and "rewards" of economic growth. Such economic refuseniks are as yet a small minority, drawn primarily from among religious fundamentalists and cultural conservatives (as in Iran and India). There may even be an element of sour grapes in this reaction. There is certainly pride. And yet I would be surprised were this movement to achieve more than temporary and local success—partly because most people prefer shoes and transistors to spiritual virtue, partly because modern technology is an important component of power, and power drives nations.

If, now, one admits the significance of this complex, relatively intractable human factor, what becomes of the effort to help the poor become richer, to spread the benefits of modern technology throughout the world, to narrow and even eliminate the gaps between haves and have-nots? Specifically, what is left of the comfort that latecomers could take in their lateness?

The answer has to be nuanced. On the one hand, the recent successes of the East Asian countries is evidence that it can pay to be late—if one possesses the social and human requisites. Lack of capital of its own will not prevent a thrifty, productive society from generating and attracting all the capital it needs, as we have seen in postwar Japan. Earlier colonial status and a history of imperial exploitation will not paralyze initiative, as it has not in Korea and Taiwan. Even the sophisticated technologies are not beyond reach.

On the other hand, today's would-be developers do seem to face greater problems than earlier followers did. For example:

(1) The very size of the gap is a discouragement. Even success looks like failure, because a large percentage gain on a small base is still smaller in absolute terms than a small gain on a large base. In real terms, then, even rapidly growing developers lose ground initially in terms of the difference between their income and that of the rich. This initial stage of relative deprivation, which easily translates into a sense of injustice, foments impatience and jealousy and contributes to the instability and inefficacy of government. (Students of revolution have long noted that trouble comes not from the depths of misery but from the appetite that grows with better eating.) It also encourages counterproductive ideology: Why should poor countries have to pay for knowledge? But if they will not pay for it, or even protect it, why should rich countries bring it to them?

(2) It is a fact of history that most developing countries are also new countries. They have young, untried institutions and administrative structures that fall far short of the tasks implicit in their ambitions for power and wealth. In many instances, they still have no firm identity, no sense of national purpose, no common



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interest. On the contrary, they suffer the pains and aftereffects of colonial arrangements imposed without regard to reason or circumstances. Government is unstable or, even if enduring, essentially brittle. The regime may call itself democratic, but the people are subjects rather than citizens. As a result, whatever the economic gap that already separates many of these countries from the rich states, it is even bigger for the want of direction (in both senses) of the would-be followers.

(3) The new technologies are so esoteric and difficult as to be almost unlearnable, except for those who leave to study in advanced countries. This very process of study abroad is both gain and loss, for these students, once they have learned, are often reluctant to go home, if only because they can do much more with their knowledge abroad. Indeed, the better they have learned the more reluctant they are to return, because the gap is bigger between earnings potential abroad and at home.

The brain drain is further aggravated by the material, political, and cultural gap between the West and the Rest. How'ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree? Even in the straitened circumstances of the typical foreign student visitor, the living tends to be better in the rich countries, the social life more exciting, the politics more interesting and, very important, much safer. Most of the world's industrial nations are democracies, and students from Third World countries who learn and train there typically enjoy far more freedom than they know at home. To be sure, they also encounter the distance and hostility of racism, subtle and overt—though far more overt in such socialist countries as the Soviet Union and China than in most Western (capitalist) nations. (So much for progressive sentiment and indoctrination: socialists are entitled.) On balance, though, the university years build expectations that the home country is not able or willing to satisfy. Hence one more good reason not to go back.

(4) One should not overlook that category of difficulties that derive from "human nature." This includes among other things what economists have called the demonstration effect: seeing is wanting. For a variety of reasons related to communications technology, the poor people of the world are bombarded by testimonies of the material advantages enjoyed by others. They do not have to travel to learn these things: they see them in films and on television, hear of them on the radio and by word of mouth. The result is a sense of impoverishment and grievance (why they and not we?) and a great impatience.

Some of this hunger finds expression in fantasy, of which the most poignant examples are the cargo cults of the Pacific—magical cults that promised to summon back the American ships that had come during the war with their precious loads of goods and goodies. Some of it takes the form of exit: the massive migration since World War II, still under way in the face of all manner of political impediments, from poor places to rich. But in my opinion its most consequential effect has been the poisoning of development efforts in the direction of haste, waste, and corruption.

Does it pay to be late? On balance, no. This is not to say that today's latecomers are condemned to remain poor. Not at all. Many of them are growing faster than their predecessors and are substantially richer than they were a generation ago. But they are probably less happy. The very knowledge of difference and deprivation is something new. We have taught them that they are poor and given them to taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. It is a bitter fruit.

What is more, the earlier confidence that history is teleological, tending irresistibly toward industrialism and modernity, no longer seems tenable. Is it time for a paradigm shift? Suppose the process of economic development is not the destiny of all humankind. Suppose instead that what we are dealing with is a pool of candidates. Some are favored by circumstances; some are not. The ones most favored go first. Others follow. And as the pool is exhausted, the hard cases remain—not only because of the misfortunes and misdeeds of history, but because, for all manner of internal reasons, they do not take to these new ways. They don't like them; they don't want them; they are discouraged from learning them; if they learn them, they want out; etc. Perhaps what we are seeing now is simply that we're getting down to the hard cases.

Hard cases make bad economics and politics. We must and shall keep trying to help, as much for ourselves as for those we want to benefit. But we're going to have to choose our targets better and aim straighter. Otherwise the costs go up and the returns go down. The present Third World debt crisis is an excellent example of misconceived and misdirected assistance. That it is costing the lenders a fortune is as it should be. That most of the banker-statesmen who engaged in this rush to throw away money are still sitting in their lavish executive suites is proof that at a higher management level, what passes for statesmanship is more important than business acumen. To be sure, these statesmen may yet succeed, with the help of thoughtful economists, in getting the taxpayer to support the loss, in which case they will have proved once again one of my favorite cynicisms, namely, that capitalism is the privatization of gains and the socialization of losses. (That's not really fair: there are losers, but not usually banks.) They will also then be encouraged to lend again on the principle that some seed may fall on fertile ground.

There must be a better way to make money in and for poor countries. For starters, direct investment in competitive enterprise is probably better than giving to governments (if governments will let us). And if we want to give away money, we can do better by putting it into children (health and education) than into the pockets of parents and so-called leaders. If we can find some way to improve these human possibilities and prospects, we may not only overcome some of the penalties of lateness but reclaim some of its advantages. Better late than never. •



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# BOOKS & The Arts

## *Stanley Kauffmann on Films*

### Bombs

"Well, gentlemen, let's get back to our desks and make the first atomic bomb." So spoke J. Robert Oppenheimer in *The Beginning or the End*, a film about the Manhattan Project made in 1947. All the principal people involved were still alive and presumably approved the way they were enacted. Since most of the characterizations were bland, if fatuous, that's understandable. Now that Oppenheimer and the other chief character, Gen. Leslie R. Groves, are dead, their characterizations in a new film are less bland.

**Fat Man and Little Boy** (Paramount)—these were the nicknames of the first two bombs—tries once again to make a film of the story, does it with more detail, and seizes its chances to be nonbland. The high (or low) point of this titivating is a nude scene in a San Francisco bed with Oppenheimer and his politically suspect lady friend. Distasteful though the scene is, it crystallizes the difficulty in this whole subject. There is no way to make a film about the Manhattan Project itself; so the filmmakers try constantly to get away from the subject and liven things up.

Groves suffers less in this hyping, though he is relieved of about 100 pounds (Paul Newman, even padded, is nothing like the general's size) and is given hokey quarrel scenes with the military and the scientists to vary the tone. And there's a romance for a young scientist who has a self-sacrificial nuclear accident (a holdover from the earlier film).

Some kind of sympathy must go out to Bruce Robinson and Roland Joffé, who wrote the screenplay. They had a thankless, no-win job. They struggled against the boundaries of fact; still, it all comes down to more sophisticated versions of the line quoted above. Joffé directed. (He directed *The Killing Fields*, on which Robinson also worked.) The direction, too, keeps falling into familiar, constricted patterns. Robinson was the writer-director of the two mordant English comedies *Withnail and I* and *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*, but don't look for any of his razoring satire here. This subject would have muffled Aristophanes.

Most of the drama comes from time pressure, the attempt to beat the presumed German efforts to make an A-bomb. When it is learned that the Germans are not working directly on such a project, Groves then has the job of keeping his scientists heated up. Japan had an A-bomb project, as Richard Rhodes tells us in *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, but it was desultory and was destroyed in an air raid on Tokyo in April 1945.

Throughout the film the moral qualms of some of the scientists keep growing, but the arguments about the saving of American lives and the postwar peaceful uses of atomic energy prevail. These qualms were not mentioned in the 1947 film; the earlier film included, however, the dropping of the first bomb. Not this one.

Newman gruffs up his voice, which is about all he can do to characterize Groves. Dwight Schultz has somewhat more success with Oppenheimer because the man was more vivid. Various other actors fill their parts obediently, like students reciting in turn. The three female roles, Oppenheimer's wife, his mistress, a nurse at the Los Alamos hospital, are mere appendages.

The Manhattan Project was a tremendous enterprise on the part of Oppenheimer and his colleagues, but also—and less well remembered—on the part of Groves and his colleagues. This obese general built and organized three huge bases—Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Los Alamos—and managed all to success within three years. Inevitably, the oldest of bitter questions arises: Why can't mankind work like that on peacetime projects? William James, who didn't believe in permanent peace, thought we had to find a moral equivalent for war to "foster rival excitements and invent new outlets for heroic energy." Well, not yet, W.J.

For the full account of the enterprise, read Rhodes. Schultz said in an interview: "I hope no one will come to this thinking it is an accurate representation of reality. . . . [The film] should spur you to go into the library and get your book out and see what is real."

Refreshingly frank. The film will have served a good purpose if it sends more people to Rhodes.

In **The Fabulous Baker Boys** (20th Century-Fox), Eddie Cantor's comic song "Makin' Whoopee," which he performed in a 1928 Broadway musical and often thereafter, is rendered as a modern torch ballad. This is the biggest novelty in the picture.

The screenplay by Steve Kloves, also

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

**Crimes and Misdemeanors.** *Woody Allen—the writer and director—at his best. (As actor, there is no best.) Civilization as veneer, divine justice, purpose in life—all trenchantly examined in slick, high-tech Manhattan. (Reviewed 11/13/89)* **High Fidelity.** *The work and the lives of the Guarneri Quartet rendered in a perceptive, charming documentary by Allan Miller, musician and filmmaker. (9/18&25/89)* **sex, lies, and videotape.** *Four young people moving through a delicately wrought texture of desires and surprises. Steven Soderbergh's first film is extraordinary. (9/4/89)* **Yaaba.** *From Burkina Faso. A simple story of an African village told with a simplicity that bespeaks skill and affection. (11/13/89)* **—SK**



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the director, is about two brothers, a cocktail-lounge piano duo on the West Coast, who are slipping. Bookings dwindle. They engage a woman vocalist to liven up their act; bookings swell. Only someone with skimpy film-going experience could not foretell that (*a*) the woman will become the star of the group, and (*b*) she will make trouble between the brothers.

One brother, Beau Bridges, is a chubby family man. The other, Jeff Bridges, is the silent, cigaretted, world-weary saloon type who has been endlessly carbon-copied since Bogart in *Casablanca*. At least Bogart's Rick had secrets to cause him taciturn sorrow; J. Bridges is a compound of fictional attitudes. Oh, yes, he really should be playing jazz instead of lounge music. Is that what he's so laconic about?

Michelle Pfeiffer is the singer, who has spent some years as a refined hooker working for an escort service. The screenplay doesn't tell us how she learned to style a song as she does at her audition or why, if she could do that, she has spent those years "escorting" when she could have been a hit singer; or why she decided to change.

Kloves writes moderately slick run-of-the-gin-mill dialogue. He may or may not have directing talent. In this, his debut film, he had the help of Sally Stevens, who apparently taught Pfeiffer the technique of putting a song over (which she does); of Michael Ballhaus, one of the best cinematographers in the world, who bathed the film in night-life glow; and of Sydney Pollack as executive producer—himself a very experienced director (*Jeremiah Johnson*, *Tootsie*, *Out of Africa*).

Pfeiffer, slithering across the piano and beds, comes across with her most telling screen appearance to date. Kloves possibly had something to do with it, but possibly less than he is being hailed for. In any case, since he gets the credit, *Baker Boys* will boost him on his way. Anyone who can make a brand-new oldie has a future in Movieland.

*Note.* Woody Allen takes sole writing credit for *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, but now we're told he didn't write all of it. Most of the comments by the old philosopher, which I said were some of Allen's best writing to date, were in fact improvised by the speaker, Martin Bergmann, a New York psychoanalyst. Allen's appropriation of sole credit may not be a crime, but isn't it a misdemeanor? •

# *Robert Brustein on Theater*

## No Secrets, No Rapture

The only thing I found provocative about **The Secret Rapture**, David Hare's new play at the Ethel Barrymore, is its title. Since the characters are far from rhapsodic and leave little undisclosed, why identify this gray slab of English masonry with a title more appropriate to dime-store romance? One clue comes in the epigraph to the published version, also included in the program—a quote from Rebecca West about that uncontrollable strain of insanity buried in the most normal lives that "loves pain and its darker night despair, and wants to die in a catastrophe that will set life back to its beginnings."

So the "secret rapture" is what Joseph Conrad (in a better phrase) called the "destructive element," those dark, unconscious forces that pulse under the smiles and nods of daylight life. Hare's recognition of those forces in *Plenty* is what occasionally elevated that play from a plateau of earnest moralizing to heights of poetic surprise. But they're only an epigraph to *The Secret Rapture*. Hare may acknowledge the irrational side of life, but here he dismally fails to dramatize it.

Part of the problem is the playwright's political agenda. Whatever his feelings about the intrinsic nature of evil, Hare believes behavior to be deeply influenced by the social environment. This endows his personal relationships with a dimension beyond the domestic, but it also imprisons his characters in representative roles. The play's heroine (once again, Hare's central character is an idealistic woman) is Isobel Glass—liberal by persuasion, therefore warm and decent and independent by nature—while her sister, Marion French, is a Conservative politician and businesswoman, thus hard-nosed, frugal, unfeeling, Darwinian. Hare makes some effort to complicate these characters—Isobel is oddly unforgiving of her boyfriend's infidelity, Marion has an uncharacteristically soft and passionate moment with her husband. But essentially, like everyone else


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in the play, they exist primarily as symbolic reflections on life and character in Margaret Thatcher's England.

Opinions about the play may therefore very well divide along political lines, and I suspect its great success in Britain may have less to do with Hare's artistic gifts than with his sympathetic convictions, particularly his belief that the conservative climate of the past decade has helped to harden human feeling. *The Secret Rapture* is not a political primer, but it's hardly a triumph of negative capability either. As a play of ideas, it's always threatening to fade off into schematism. The neurotic heroine of *Plenty* managed to leave us in mystery and ambiguity; the remorselessly virtuous Isobel Glass does not.

What's missing from *The Secret Rapture* is a plausible plot. The play begins around the body of Isobel and Marion's father, an antiquarian bookseller who lived a life of thought. Isobel has been mourning him in the dark; Marion's primary interest is to retrieve the expensive ring she once gave him. Isobel is a partner in a small design studio and loves her designer-partner, Irwin; Marion is a junior minister in the Thatcher government, married to a Jesus-loving businessman. Isobel has compassion for her father's addictive wife, Katherine; Marion would just as soon consign her to an alcoholic ward.

Marion and her husband manage to persuade Isobel to expand her company, which they then plunder through a series of manipulations, investments, and mergers. Possibly corrupted by this atmosphere of opportunism and greed, Irwin goes to bed with Marion's assistant, Rhonda, and when Isobel refuses to absolve him, he shoots her. Too late, Marion acknowledges the decency of her sister—at the same time that the audience is acknowledging the collapse of decency in a time of corroded values.

Despite the echoes of *Heartbreak House* reverberating throughout the play (Isobel as the disillusioned, heartbroken Ellie Dunn; Marion as Lady Utterword, the flinty conservative from Horseback Hall), Hare does not leaven this matter with wit, and his language is surprisingly flavorless and plain, oddly crusty and dry. The style is so telegraphic it sometimes approaches parody (Marion: "I was wondering . . ." Isobel: "What?" Marion: "No, it's just . . . no, it's nothing."), which makes the speakers appear repressed, anemic—the lawn sculpture of a desiccated bourgeois landscape. The play is showy in only one respect: the way it so colorlessly proclaims its own integrity.

That tone of ostentatious integrity is exacerbated by the droning New York production that Hare (mistakenly, I think) chose to direct himself. Santo Loquasto has designed a number of semi-abstract settings to suggest bedrooms, living rooms, and offices. These are sometimes quite beautiful (the autumnal landscape on the lawn of the family house captures the auburn tints in the hair of the two sisters), but they also tend to look uninhabited—largely because of the playwright's static staging. His characters have a way of freezing for audience address, as if to enunciate soliloquies from *The Cocktail Party*, so that we're asked to appreciate recitation rather than acting, to admire how well these Americans are managing their upper-class English accents.

They manage these well enough, but since the actors don't have very interesting characters to play, their elocution seems more decorative than expressive. Blair Brown, for whom the part of Isobel was written, reminds me of those well-scrubbed, unattainable Seven Sisters girls that Scott Fitzgerald used to write about with such an aching heart, who usually ended up living in Westchester, driving the Chrysler station wagon to PTA meetings. Now gone a touch matronly, she still wears that tortoise-shell band in her hair, still evokes the pangs of nostalgic heartbreak; but she belongs more to Philip Barry's theatrical world than to Hare's.

Frances Conroy plays Marion and gives the most convincingly textured performance of the evening. Usually cast as soft, womanly women, this actress has lately been showing a much wider range—in such diverse roles as Sonya in Serban's production of *Uncle Vanya* and as Mrs. Gibbs in the Lincoln Center *Our Town*. Here playing an efficient female politician, an icon of disapproval in a pin-striped suit, she invests her character with a lot more complexity than is found in the written role, and almost manages to make credible her final moment of remorse.

Mary Beth Hurt's characterization as the kooky Katherine is not one of her strongest performances, though it's impossible to dislike this actress. One senses the almost physical labor with which she tries to bring her character to life, bending her knees like a tennis player lining up a forehand or a golfer preparing to putt, and her voice tends to echo stertorously through the unoccupied spaces. The two male parts are underwritten and underplayed: Michael Wincott steely and stone-faced as Irwin, Stephen Vinovich affable as Tom, a man with a good nature but a rather feeble mind ("We try to do business the way Jesus would have done it").

David Hare is one of a growing number of male playwrights regarding manner and mores from a female point of view, on the assumption that what is happening to women is the best indicator of the current social climate. Susan Traherne in *Plenty*, with her ferocious disenchantment, lacerated character, and blistering tongue, vindicated this assumption because Hare conceived her as an interesting character in her own right; Isobel Glass is too full of the milk of human kindness to take on convincing dimension. Because she is never much more than an allegorical abstraction in a masque of contrivance, one ends up loving her virtues without being touched by her fate.

*Dangerous Games* is a dance evening at the Nederlander conceived, directed, choreographed, and generally tarted up by Graciela Daniele. Daniele has now choreographed a number of Broadway productions, including *Tango Apasionado*, with her current musical collaborator and fellow Argentinean, Astor Piazzolla, who has been instrumental in renewing the popularity of the tango as a dance form. *Dangerous Games* may be enough to kill its fame abruptly. One needs a new term to describe this evening—choreopathology. I don't recall ever leaving a show with such queasy feelings about the gangrenous possibilities of dance.

The evening is structured in two tiers, the first (called "Tango") taking place in a whore house. There two brothers breathe heavily over a new arrival, to the accompaniment of William Finn's awkward lyrics ("It might have been they took an oath / You love one brother, you love both"). The brothers brandish knives at all their rivals, later at each other, stopping just short of double murder when they look deeply and fraternally into each other's eyes. As for the choreopathology, consider the way the male customers torment and abuse the whores; and if you think this may be Daniele's feminist comment on Latin American machismo, then what accounts for their squeals of delight whenever these hookers have their hair yanked or their breasts fondled during their supine journey along the floor? (Few women in this bizarre brothel ever manage to raise their heads above the level of a male belt buckle.)

If the first piece is a kind of *Apocalypsis* for female masochists, the second uses painful historical memories for the sake of show-biz epiphanies. "Orfeo" is offered to us as an effort to apply the Orpheus myth to contemporary Argentine politics, but once again history is refracted through Daniele's choreosexual imagination. A program note tells the story of Orpheus and explains the mean-



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ing of "*desaparecidos*"; those who haven't heard of either are in a better position to admire without protest Daniele's gift for turning issues of torture, murder, and family separation into terpsichorean glitz.

In her version, a little girl, whose mother and father have "disappeared," has a dream in which the same black man who killed her parents mutilates, lacerates, and otherwise defaces Eurydice (here called "Dicha"), until Orfeo comes along to bring her back from the dead. (Asked his profession, Orfeo replies: "I help the sun to rise.") Female bodies, whips and bolos, and pigeon Spanish fly through the ether, ballasted by Finn's leaden, unparsable lyrics ("What they want from me I can't say / All I know is that I'm in the way"). Orfeo gains and then loses Dicha. The torturer whips all the women (literally) into a frenzy, and the little girl wakes up smiling to the sunrise. I guess all this is meant to prove that anything too brutal to be spoken or too stupid to be sung can always be danced. •

**Abraham Lincoln, tactician and saint.**

# *To the Gettysburg Station*

**BY ANDREW DELBANCO**

There is a story that when President Lincoln, after long debate within his Cabinet and within himself, finally signed the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, witnesses noticed that his hand was shaking.

This tremor suggests, for some historians, that Lincoln feared he was making a terrible mistake. General McClellan, whose victory at Antietam had stopped Lee's advance into Union territory, was murmuring that he would not fight to free slaves. Some members of the Cabinet worried about the consequences of creating a large, free black population before steps had been taken for their colonization outside the country. Though Lincoln was proposing only to emancipate the slaves held in states that were in rebellion, certain Cabinet members feared that the loyal border states would feel threatened, and would swing back toward the Confederacy.

Lincoln had consistently maintained, throughout his political career that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." In an effort to stem the rush toward secession, he reiterated these words in his First Inaugural Address. Still, despite these moral and strategic objections, Lincoln went ahead and signed a document that, in Richard Hofstadter's words, "had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading."

The story of emancipation is sometimes described as a singular moment of moral courage, as the climax of Lincoln's lifelong abhorrence of "the odious institution of slavery," which can be dated at least as far back as his own account of seeing slaves on a Mississippi barge "strung together like so many fish on a trot line." Yet he often expressed the sentiment that "if all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution," and as the exigencies of war pushed him closer toward emancipation, he acknowledged that "in a certain sense the liberation of slaves is the destruction of private property."

*Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings*
edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher
(Library of America, 2 vols.,
898 pp., 787 pp., $35 each)

With these words in mind, one can tell the story of emancipation as the final triumph within Lincoln's heart of what Secretary of State William Seward called "the higher law" over legal compunction. But it can also be told as a story of abject expediency: W. E. B. DuBois argued long ago that the real impetus for emancipation came from the generals, who wished to reduce the burden of holding and transporting captured Confederate "property," and to nullify the value of their labor to the rebels. It is a small and plausible step from that argument to say that Lincoln's action was merely an enlargement of the strategy to weaken the economic base of the enemy.

The fact is—it is worth remarking even in this age, when we are told that history is just another changeable text—that we shall never know why (or if) Lincoln's hand trembled. Some say it was from fear and doubt; others say it was a symptom of his knowledge that, after a lifetime of hampered struggle, he was profoundly transforming the world; still others, that it might have been the physiological result of too much handshaking on the White House receiving line. It is equally possible that his hand did not tremble at all, that this, too, was a witness's embellishment that became part of the Lincoln legend.

"Getting right with Lincoln," as David Donald put it 30 years ago, is not easy. Lincoln did not live to give us any retrospective writings that might have rendered him less mysterious. Between us and the man stands a larger body of myth than surrounds any other figure in American history: not so much apocryphal legend as a mass of lore that has become an important part of Americans' relatively fragile sense of possessing a common history. This is most obvious in certain famous versions of Lincoln. In the 1930s Carl Sandburg's gaunt man of the prairie gave Americans, by his example of frugality and endurance and selflessness, a kind of mirror of reassurance. By the 1950s we had a cold war Lincoln, broadcast to millions in James Agee's television play, *Young Abe Lincoln*; in an allegory of isolationist America, gentle Abe steps forward, after one provocation too many from the town bully, to teach him a lesson, and then to redeem him.

Everyone, I suspect, carries in mind personal, even private, images of Lincoln. My own earliest sense of him came in a story I read in a child's biography: young Abe lifts a local boy upside down in the Lincolns' house and has him stomp muddy footprints across the ceiling. I imagined, with a kind of jealous wonderment, the pleasure he took in explaining this phenomenon when his mother got home. If Lincoln is personally present in some such way to many Americans, the most moving version of the myth remains Whitman's great poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," which does nothing less than master the poet's fear of death by contemplating the "fulfill'd noon" of Union as the fittest image "to adorn the burial house of him I love." The republic, and the poet, are reborn in their twin vigils before the "coffin that passes through lanes and streets / Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land . . . .

Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

Achieving a sense of immortality by con-

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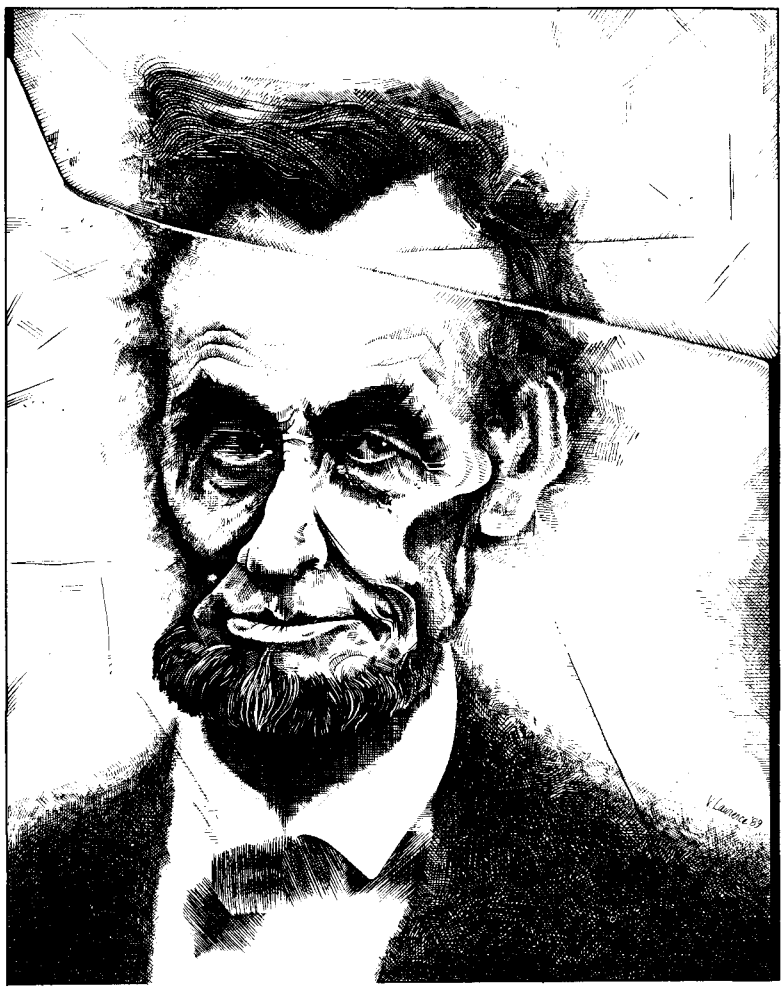
templating Lincoln's legacy—the restored Union—Whitman celebrated his transformation from a beleaguered man into a national symbol.

Immediately upon Lincoln's death, the change began to take place—even in some parts of the South where, not long before, he had been represented in political cartoons as a thick-lipped and hook-nosed monster, an amalgam of Negro and Jew. One eulogist, a New York Congregationalist minister, made explicit the notion that Lincoln's life not only conformed to the Christian pilgrimage, but was a virtual re-enactment of Christ's years on earth. This was a striking contrast (again, in keeping with Christ's own life) to the mockery and the contempt with which Lincoln had been regarded while he lived. To many Americans, perhaps to a majority of them (Lincoln won only a plurality of votes in a four-candidate election), he was a boor, an incompetent oaf, a petty, ill-tempered tyrant. He was compared to a rail, a snake, a pretzel.

Still, after his martyrdom (Lincoln died on Good Friday), belief in him conferred eternal life upon the believer: "his first fifty years were a training school of Providence for the five that constitute his historical life." He disseminated "his philosophy in parables," and "went through life bearing the load of a people's sorrows upon his shoulders." With his life, "a new era was born that is glorified and made perpetual through his death." With a few substitutions—"sins" for "sorrows"—the Lincoln story and the Christ story had become one and the same.

Can an unmediated sense of Lincoln's actual being still be attained? Can one, as Edmund Wilson thought Sandburg had not done, do "justice to the tautness and hard distinction that we find when, disregarding legends, we attack Lincoln's writings in bulk"? The distinguished scholar Don E. Fehrenbacher has now made it possible to read Lincoln in bulk without having to attack the nine-volume edition of the *Collected Works*. This is the fullest and most reliable collection of Lincoln's writing ever published.

It includes not only all of Lincoln's speeches, letters, and messages to Congress, but also the full text of the seven debates with Stephen Douglas, as well as fragmentary notes, telegrams to field commanders, and various memoranda. Virtually every surviving scrap of Lincoln's writing is here, and behind them all is the writer who, as Shelby Foote has put it, "wrote American—same kind of American that Mark Twain was to write later on." This was a language of almost styleless clarity; astringent and undecorated compared with the perfumed rhetoric of his time.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

One notices Lincoln's distinctness even in the casual soapbox banter. Where Douglas tries awkward gestures of humility—"Permit me to say that unless silence is observed it will be impossible for me to be heard by this immense crowd. . . . I desire to be heard rather than to be applauded"—Lincoln prefers a comic insult: "Since Judge Douglas has said to you in his conclusion that he had not time in an hour and a half to answer all I had said in an hour, it follows of course that I will not be able to answer in half an hour all that he said in an hour and a half." Both men's strategies involve false modesty, but Lincoln always invites his audience into the joke, never condescends, never pontificates. Once a speech gets under way, he expresses his positions in a plain, almost invisible language: "Our fathers *did not* make this nation half slave and half free . . . they found the institution of slavery existing here." Or, as in the speeches near the end of his life, as if the words have been dictated by the holy spirit:

> Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

Despite the translucent arguments of the early Lincoln and the possessed prose of the late, there remain obstacles to an unobstructed sense of the man. There is an eerie impersonality to the writing. Fehrenbacher has pointed out, moreover, that "spoken words in the days before the phonograph were literally breaths instantly dissolved in the air." Much of our sense of Lincoln's character—his humor, his political nimbleness, his haunted sense of living in the grip of destiny—depends on "spoken words attributed to him in diaries, contemporary letters, and reminiscent writings." Unless Lincoln's words are preserved in his own hand or were transcribed for newspaper reports, they have too weak a claim to authenticity to be included among his writings.

And even if they meet one of these conditions, the usual questions of revision—Lincoln did not always follow his own written text in his delivery—and the reliability of transcription—many of his speeches appeared in the press within days in differing versions—are often unanswerable. Fehrenbacher prints a text of the Gettysburg Address, for instance, that Lincoln prepared for publication months after the event, even though the Associated Press version, published



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from shorthand notes right after the speech, may be "closer to what he actually said." Similarly, the "House Divided" speech exists in several versions, some of which contain a comma in the famous sentence "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*." With the comma in place, the sentence is urgently ominous: a statement that the very existence of the United States is already at risk, and must be secured by remedial action. That is how Southerners read it, as a threat. Without the comma, however, it becomes merely the observation that someday the division between North and South may have to be closed.

Apart from such issues of transmission and provenance, anyone who would "get right with Lincoln" must also deal with the fact that Lincoln was the chief architect of his own myth. He was the first President to use photography as an instrument of what we now routinely think of as image-making; and, as an aspirant to local office in Illinois, he already made crafty use of his relatively poor origins to appeal to voters who disliked any hint of privilege. "Twelve years ago," he writes to a fellow Whig in 1843, whom he knew could be counted on to spread the sentiment, he was a ". . . friendless, uneducated, penniless boy, working on a flat boat." In 1860, campaigning in Connecticut for the Republican Presidential nomination, he was still getting mileage out of the same vessel: "twenty five years ago I was a hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat-boat."

Something of the Lincoln legend, then, was designed and maintained by the man himself. Much of the rest was established by friends who survived him—by his law partner William Herndon, who published an adoring biographical memoir animated by a mysterious dislike for Mary Todd; by John Nicolay and John Hay, the young men Lincoln employed as his secretaries, who compiled the collection of his writings that remained standard until the 1950s. In the 1890s came Ida Tarbell, who was hired by *McClure's Magazine* to make a narrative out of the mass of material that poured in when the editors (aware that most of Lincoln's contemporaries were dying) published an open call for papers and reminiscences. A "Lincoln Bureau" was set up in their editorial offices, and, out of what Tarbell called a work "in which the whole country co-operated," she produced a four-volume biography, taking pains to give Lincoln a respectable genealogy stretching back to early New England, and portraying his father as less the shiftless wanderer than the self-reliant frontiersman. Lincoln was cleaned up in the image of a Progressive crusader. Yet this was all groundwork for the dominant modern image of Lincoln—Sandburg's reluctant but invincible prairie sheriff, Gary Cooper at the national *High Noon*.

Since this procession of Lincolns will continue to grow longer, one may ask, on the occasion of the Library of America edition: What will come next? The answer, I think, is that we are likely to see a resurgence of interest in Lincoln the tactician.

There is plenty of material for such a portrait. As a rising young lawyer, he argued both sides of fugitive slave cases, depending on whom he was working for. When he became a figure in national politics, he learned to adjust his tone to his audience. Speaking rhetorically to Southerners in 1854, he objected that "you require me to deny the humanity of the negro," to think of him as nothing more than a transportable hog, a beast of burden. But in 1858, in Charleston, Illinois (in the southern part of the state), he turned back Senator Douglas's implication that he was abnormally fond of blacks by clearing himself of the charge by inciting racist laughter: "I do not understand that because I do not want a


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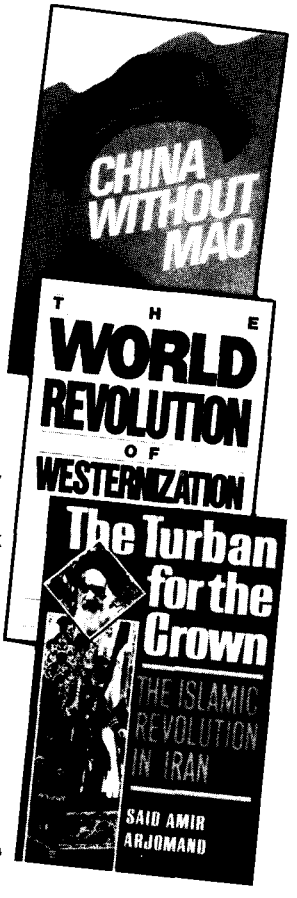
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negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife." At Peoria (a place of which politicians asked even then, will it play?) he declared that "my own feelings will not admit" of the idea that we should "make them politically and socially our equals."

These are instances of the politically canny Lincoln, who had a sharp instinct for adapting his tone and his emphasis to place, moment, and occasion. One imagines how television would cover a Lincoln campaign today. It would be easy to discredit him as an inconstant opportunist by splicing together a few "sound bites" from region to region: to audiences of workers, he champions labor with a camp-meeting fervor; to financially substantial New Yorkers, he moderates his tone and argues legalistically the right of the federal government to exclude slavery from the territories.

Still, however variable Lincoln might appear in such juxtapositions, he never fundamentally contradicted himself. He always held to his "ancient faith . . . that 'all men are created equal,' and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another." Until the war Lincoln never presumed the right to attack slavery where history had fostered it. He stuck to "the naked question" of how to keep it from spreading. He was, in this sense, truly Whitman's "sweet democratic despot of the West," where he spoke (in Frederick Jackson Turner's words) for "the 'settler' [who] is ready to sell out, and take the advantage of the rise of property—[and] push farther into the interior, and become, himself, a man of capital and enterprise in turn." There was no room for slavery in this vision.

According to some recent historians, this notion of the empowering West was always a sham, since westward migration was more often a bonanza for railroads and banks than for ordinary working men. However deceptive the promise may have been, it was the dream of the day. By invoking it, Lincoln was able to offer a vision in which labor and capital became, in effect, the same thing at different stages of development. Here is Lincoln bringing the frontier gospel east, to New Haven, where he spoke to an audience of tradesmen and workers very much aware of a shoe strike in nearby Massachusetts: "I want every man to have the chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he *can* better his condition—when he may look forward and hope to be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself afterward, and finally to hire men to work for him!" It was from this faith in individual self-government and self-improvement that much of the anti-slavery feeling in the nation arose.

Lincoln sincerely shared the feeling. He also used it for political purposes. In fashioning himself into an anti-slavery politician, Lincoln sometimes used lofty, cadenced language: "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve." But he also used a different sort of talk: "I cannot shake Judge Douglas's teeth loose from the Dred Scott decision. Like some obstinate animal (I mean no disrespect) that will hang on when he has once got his teeth fixed,—you may cut off a leg, or you may tear away an arm, still he will not relax his hold." It was Lincoln's political genius to make these two ways of talking work together. As President he spoke mainly in the elevated voice—"We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth"—but the stately and the homespun Lincoln were never in conflict.

As a candidate for President, he competed with Douglas (especially in southern Illinois and Ohio) for the anti-Negro vote, knowing that anti-slavery feeling was in many ways a form of anti-Negro feeling. He may have triumphed in the end (though he lost the Senatorial campaign of 1858) because he offered to worried voters more credible assurance than Douglas that he would keep blacks out of the white man's territories. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 had organized the territories while leaving unsettled the question of whether they would eventually be admitted to the Union as slave or free states. This was to be determined by a vote of the "squatters," or, as it came to be known, by "popular sovereignty." Upon the passage of the act, Lincoln immediately saw disaster coming. To an audience of worried whites at Peoria, Lincoln ridiculed the idea that slavery will be excluded by the climate of the territories (which Douglas may actually have believed). This, he said, is nothing but "a palliation, a lullaby." Parts of Kentucky, he pointed out, lie further north than parts of Ohio, and yet slavery thrives there. As for the new territories, "They are the places for poor people to go to, and better their condition." The implication here is that under the Democrats not only will blacks come in chains and numbers, but poor whites will not necessarily remain free.

The doctrine of "popular sovereignty" was, in Lincoln's view, nothing more than a repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had excluded slavery from the unorganized territories of the Louisiana Purchase north of 36° 30'. Not only could the territories be voted into the Union as slave states, but—after the *Dred Scott* decision, which followed in 1857, and forbade interference by Congress or any territorial legislature in the property rights of slaveholders—what was to prevent slaveholders from bringing their property anywhere they pleased? The protection of property rights has always been a dangerous premise to tamper with in American politics; but Lincoln questioned it. There was no reason, he said, that the slave power would not take it a step further: to secure "the sacred right to the people of the States or the Territories themselves to buy slaves, wherever they can buy them cheapest." By his sarcastic use of "sacred," Lincoln was mocking Douglas, who sprinkled his "popular sovereignty" speeches with that word.

Lincoln was in no danger of being misunderstood. He meant that under the policy of the Democratic Party, under the deadly combination of "popular sovereignty" and the *Dred Scott* decision, the African slave trade itself would sooner or later be revived, whatever the legal impediments in place against it might be. "Unquestionably [slaves] can be bought cheaper in Africa than in Virginia." In a country already one-sixth enslaved, as he was careful to remind his audiences, this could only mean a great increase in the slave population. Lincoln was painting a picture that he knew was frightening. He was holding up the specter of America turning black—or, even more ominously, the possibility that slavery itself would break free of racial categories.

Yet free-soil politics was not merely a politics of fear. The very idea of slavery was a kind of violation of what might be called the republican theodicy. Degradation and social failure had to be understood in antebellum America—even before Protestant self-reliance combined with greed to create the frantic atmosphere of the Gilded Age—as self-wrought punishments. If you were at the bottom of the ladder, you had gotten yourself there. Slavery, as an inherited and racially determined condition, was at odds with that principle. Despite widespread racism in the free states as well as in the South, there was a deep antipathy to slavery in the very constitution of the American self.

Lincoln also appealed to the people's sense that there was malevolent conspiracy in high places. He regarded the Kansas-Nebraska Act, by which those territories were admitted under the principle of "popular sovereignty," as the first step in a scheme devised by three men—Senator Douglas, Chief Justice Roger Taney, and President James Buchanan. The second step was Taney's decision in the *Dred Scott* case, which en-



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sured that "popular sovereignty" was a deceit, because any vote to exclude slavery would be judged, under the legal principles underlying *Dred Scott*, to be an unconstitutional violation of the property rights of slaveholders. Douglas, Taney, and Buchanan (who had helped to steer the Kansas-Nebraska Act through Congress, and had urged acceptance of the Supreme Court decision even before he knew officially what it was going to be) had thereby ensured that slavery could never contract, only expand.

The whole business, Lincoln thought, was a plot to make slave property portable and secure. Even before *Dred Scott*, he warned that "this government is sought to be put on a new track. Slavery is to be made a ruling element in our government." And when the Court handed down its ruling, he argued that the Democrats had constructed an "almost complete legal combination—[a] piece of machinery, so to speak—compounded of the Nebraska doctrine and the Dred Scott decision." The Kansas-Nebraska Act had created "an exactly fitted niche for the Dred Scott decision to afterward come into."

Even before the infernal machine was all in place, news of the passage of the act left Lincoln "thunderstruck and stunned." Aroused "as he had never been aroused before," he was transformed into a national politician. It was then that his crusade began. The one consuming goal of his public life was to save the Union. "My paramount object in this struggle," he wrote to Horace Greeley, who was urging outright emancipation in the summer of 1862, "is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

By the end of 1862, however, Lincoln was telling Congress—in a message calling for compensated emancipation—that "without slavery the rebellion could never have existed; without slavery it could not continue." Some critics—like the Ohio Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham (who was arrested after campaigning against "King Lincoln," and whose name became a verb meaning to muzzle by force)—thought that Lincoln was becoming crazed by his sense of mission, and was dragging the whole nation deeper into catastrophe. Lincoln was giving expression to what Melville, writing ten years earlier about a whaleship captain obsessed with a voyage of revenge, had called "monomania": "To accomplish his object [he] . . . must use tools; and of all tools used in the shadow of the moon, men are most apt to get out of order." Like Melville's "ungodly, godlike man," Lincoln was ruthless in achieving his end, and capable of withering rage; he exploded in anger after the Battle of Gettysburg, when General Meade reported that "we have driven the enemy from our soil." In his hell-bent moods, Lincoln regarded as a traitor anyone who even talked as if the war were an engagement between two countries.

I suspect that in the coming years we will get, from those (on both left and right) who consider politics as chiefly the management of corporate affairs, a Lincoln whose commitment to Union was merely the self-interested policy of a big-business Republican who regarded a new national boundary between North and South as an intolerable obstacle to interstate commerce. But Lincoln's contemporaries were not so cynical. Alexander Stephens—Vice President of the Confederacy, and a man of whom Lincoln had once said (in the days when they both opposed the Mexican War) "that he gave the very best speech . . . that I ever heard"—remarked that for Lincoln the principle of Union rose "to the sublimity of a religious mysticism." Stephens had in mind the Lincoln who spoke rapturously of the "mystic chords of memory" that would restore Americans to a sense of fraternal connection after the terrible war. This, not unimpeded commerce, was the commitment of Lincoln's soul.

"The white whale," Ahab explains in Melville's prescient novel, " . . . tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and . . . I will wreak that hate upon him." Lincoln, too, spoke of hate. As for Douglas's willingness to let the fate of slavery in the territories be determined by how many slaveholding squatters raced in, Lincoln expressed disgust:

> This declared indifference, but, as I must think, covert real zeal, for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.

This was the Lincoln who was willing to employ any means to achieve his ends, which were not those of an opportunist, but of a fearfully consistent believer.


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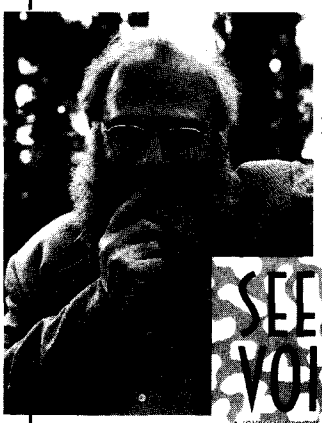


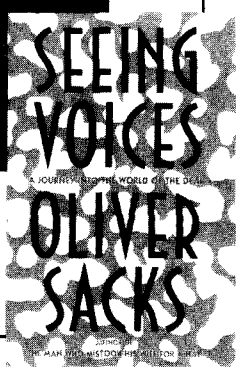


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Within the limits of established constitutional principle (in which he did not include Kansas-Nebraska and *Dred Scott*), he would do everything to confine slavery, so that it might choke to death; and he would allow nothing that would release it into new spaces. The Southerners who moved toward secession upon his election had gotten him right.

For Lincoln, they knew, politics was more than maneuvering for power or brokering disputes. It was, in its highest form, the forcible establishment of belief upon a people who, as Tocqueville had seen some decades earlier, were only loosely bound by tradition and custom and shared experience. "The strongest bulwark of any government," Lincoln had warned in the 1830s, " . . . may effectually be broken down and destroyed—I mean the attachment of the people." Now, in his campaign for the Presidency, he spoke of the struggle to "place [slavery] where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction." This commitment was the heart of Lincoln's politics, and it reveals why it is wrong—despite the rhetoric of the letter to Greeley—to regard slavery as a secondary matter, or a matter of indifference, to him. Not just Union, but a Union built on the principle of free labor (for white and black), was the ultimate ground of Lincoln's faith.

Until the war (there is continuing debate among historians over whether Lincoln did everything possible to prevent it), he was content to allow time to work the death of slavery. He took pains to dissociate himself from the abolitionists, and considered men like John Brown to be fanatics. But as the war went on, Lincoln became a haunted man. He had nightmares and fainting spells and even daytime hallucinations; they seemed to foretell his death. A palpable agony flows beneath the firm surface of his public utterances, breaking out into sorrow, into what is almost a plea for forgiveness in the great late speeches. Lincoln must have wondered if the war would achieve anything except an ocean of death. He must have feared that the problem of slavery would return unresolved if he did not act to resolve it. His loneliness must have been terrible.

Yet, as Stephens implied, Union was Lincoln's true religion, and it sustained him. Already as a candidate for Congress in 1846, he had been charged with infidelity by his opponent, a Methodist circuit-rider, and had defended himself with strikingly negative formulations: "I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular . . . [and] I do not think I could myself, be brought to support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open enemy of, and scoffer at, religion." These deflections worked. Lincoln's success became the most fateful instance in American history of the transformation of sectarian politics into what he called "political religion."

His reply to his accuser was technical and even a little evasive, but his political oratory continued to draw heavily upon the vocabulary of faith. Excoriating certain Whig abolitionists for failing to support Henry Clay in 1845, he reminded them that "by the *fruit* the tree is to be known"; the "House Divided" speech plays variations on Mark and Matthew; at Peoria, in 1854, he employed the language of Revelation—substituting the birth pangs of the republic for the blood of the lamb—and declared that "our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution." In the opening of the Gettysburg Address, he spoke of the founding of the republic as if it were a new Genesis. "It may seem strange," he said in the chastened and tender voice of the Second Inaugural, "that any men should dare to ask a just god's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged."

Lincoln understood that the national scripture—the Constitution—had been contaminated by its tacit acknowledgment of slavery (in its notorious clause by which slaves were counted as "three-fifths" of other persons for the purposes of representation). "The thing," Lincoln knew, "is hid away in the Constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or cancer which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death,—with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at a certain time." And so when he defended the Constitution, he had to rely on "extra-textual" evidence for making his case that the Founders had the ultimate extinction of slavery in mind when they wrote it. In his early speeches he appealed to the loyalty of the people toward the Fathers, a "brave, and patriotic, but now lamented and departed race of ancestors," who had "hedged and hemmed . . . [slavery] in to the narrowest limits of necessity." As a candidate for President, he saw himself as protecting their work. As a wartime President he saw himself as completing it.

If the Constitution was an anti-slavery document to most Northerners, however, it remained a pro-slavery document to Southerners—and here was the political impasse at which the United States had arrived. This was why William Lloyd Garrison declared the Constitution the work of the devil. This was why the prophetic works of American literature before the war intimated complete cultural breakdown. In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), a guilt-ridden minister reveals his branded chest before a crowd that cannot agree on what it sees. In *Moby Dick* (1851) a black cabin boy stands before the gold doubloon that Ahab has nailed to the mast, and all he can do is to conjugate a verb: "I look, you look, he looks, we look, you look, they look."

These prophecies of chaos in America were confirmed by events. If the opening of the West had been proclaimed a "safety-valve" (in the phrase of Ohio Senator Lewis Cass) by which such antagonisms would disperse and evaporate, in fact the contention over the territories made it clearer than ever that North and South were on a collision course. Certain New England moralists tried to deal with the problem by taking

## *The Romance of American Communism*

The generation of Aunt Stalin and Uncle Pain
Believed in the glories of the Five Year Plan,
The march of progress, etcetera, and so on . . .

How far away it seems: the new order, the slogan
Of History trudging the unemployment line . . .
Confess, confess: Aunt Stalin and Uncle Pain

Stood on streetcorners in the driving rain
Distributing pamphlets for Grandfather Lenin—
*The New Masses*, *The Commune*, etc., so on . . .

Statistics from Moscow, workers in the Kremlin,
The price of tractors and the cost of grain . . .
But the generation of Aunt Stalin and Uncle Pain

Was startled by the stories of Siberian
Camps: oh comrades of death, innocents of treason!
The bourgeois nature of regret, etc., so on . . .

In the end, it was self-loathing, self-recrimination:
A season in hell, yes, but the wrong season.
The sacrifice of Aunt Stalin and Uncle Pain—
The march of History, etcetera, and so on . . .

**Edward Hirsch**



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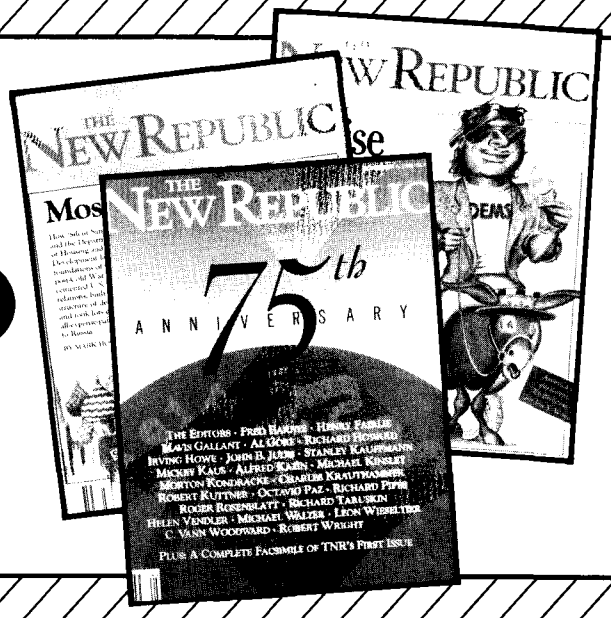


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recourse from the Constitution to the Bible itself, explaining away its own references to slaves by applying the "Higher Criticism," through which awkward passages (such as those in which Paul instructs servants to obey their masters) could be interpreted in light of its overall Christian spirit.

Lincoln's solution was different. He nominated another scripture. For him the true "sheet anchors of the republic" was the Declaration of Independence; and it was its principle of equality—unmitigated and beyond compromise—to which he committed himself. That is why, in the Gettysburg Address, he comes close to saying that the age of the world itself is four score and seven years. The Messiah of democratic government was born in 1776.

Imagining the fulfillment of democratic principles in America (as certain Christians have imagined the Second Coming), Lincoln certainly stumbled—as did virtually everyone in his time—over the issue of race. Taney, in the detested *Dred Scott* decision, had asked, "Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States?" Taney was one of Lincoln's most resolute enemies; but Jefferson, Lincoln's hero, whom he called "the most distinguished politician in our history," had asked virtually the same question in 1787 ("Why not retain and incorporate the blacks [after emancipation] into the states?") and had answered it with a catalog of cultural and physical differences that proved the impossibility of a biracial republic. Lincoln, like Jefferson, was in favor of African repatriation for freed slaves, or their colonization elsewhere—but so was Harriet Beecher Stowe, and so were some blacks. The fact is that very few Americans before or immediately after the war could imagine a society that incorporated whites and blacks on the basis of equality.

For this reason, among others, Lincoln was never recriminating or self-righteous toward white Southerners as a whole. Unlike Seward, unlike the old cotton Whig Edward Everett, who ran against him and then shared the platform with him at Gettysburg (Everett excoriated the satanic enemy, while Lincoln spoke quietly about consecrated ground), unlike Salmon P. Chase and the ferocious Charles Sumner, Lincoln was capable of inhabiting the Southern mind. He saw himself not as punishing the South, but as delivering it from what James M. McPherson has recently called its "Orwellian" notion that "freedom is not possible without slavery." He also refused to locate evil exclusively outside the self: "When it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South has been more responsible than the North for [the] continuance" of slavery.

When, upon Lincoln's election in 1860, Jefferson Davis had urged secession upon his fellow Mississippians, he posed the following question: "Will you be slaves, or will you be independent?" Lincoln knew that white Southerners had become imprisoned in the terrible irony of that question, and he never reviled them for it. For these reasons, perhaps, some of Lincoln's more profound students in the 20th century—Robert Penn Warren, David Herbert Donald, C. Vann Woodward—have been Southerners, and have understood the narrowness of the path that Lincoln walked between his personal hatred for slavery and his sense of the weight of history.

The most extraordinary expressions of Lincoln's magnanimity remain the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. At Gettysburg he eschewed the usual rhetoric of war, even while speaking on the battlefield of an unfinished conflict, in the presence of some who wished to negotiate a truce short of victory. In Everett's interminable oration that preceded Lincoln's three minutes, the Massachusetts Governor blasted the enemy as alien, infernal, and bloodthirsty. In the President's address no enemy is ever mentioned. He builds his homily not on a structure of oppositions, but around the word "dedicate," which he uses in different ways four times, and which builds a greater and greater sense of bound humility and transcendent possibility. The verbs with which he frames the main body of his message—"endure" and "perish"—are intransitive. They depend on no resistant object for their meaning.

The force of the whole speech is not to inspire or maintain enmity, but to foster a new measure of positive devotion to the principle invoked by the opening invocation of Genesis: the equality principle of the Declaration. This is a universalist vision. It posits no Satan. The only evil it understands—with a singleness of purpose that is appalling and sublime—is the evil of incompleteness. Thus Lincoln ensured that the Gettysburg battlefield would become a genuinely sacred place for the American republic.

It has been said, with bitter wisdom, that "the life of Lincoln's soul was almost entirely without consummation." By this remark Richard Hofstadter meant that Lincoln's religious vision of a Union inhabited by free and equal citizens gave way to the coarse reality of Gilded Age America, built largely on the backs of exploited working men, women, and degraded blacks. Lincoln's principles may still prove impossible to realize as the foundations of a civil society. It was his political and literary genius, however, to have once compelled Americans to embrace them, even at the cost of nearly a million dead. •

# *Tao Jones*

**BY ROBERT WRIGHT**

## Microcosm: The Quantum Revolution in Economics and Technology by George Gilder

**(Simon and Schuster, 426 pp., $19.95)**

Why is it that adherents of New Age philosophies usually lean to the left? Why does the audience for *The Tao of Physics* and *The Holographic Paradigm* include so many people who want world disarmament and massive income redistribution, and so few who espouse supply-side economics? Why can't you subscribe to some pop-spiritual pseudo-scientific doctrine and still vote Republican?

Now you can. George Gilder, the celebrated author of *Wealth and Poverty*, has written a book called *Microcosm*, which heralds the dawning of "the Quantum Era," a time when modern science and technology will unleash potent new spiritual, philosophical, and political forces. And these forces will align in remarkable fashion with conservatism. In the Quantum Era, Gilder says, gutsy entrepreneurship will flourish, and large bureaucracies will see their suffocating effect on individual initiative weaken. The philosophical basis of Marxism will crumble,



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and the technological basis for the Strategic Defense Initiative will solidify. Etc.

This is hardly the first time Gilder has endorsed a conservative agenda, or the first time he has tried to make it sound like a divine imperative; nor is this the first time he has delved into science for further support. But this time he has delved very, very deeply—into quantum physics and even metaphysics, the well-trodden turf of such high-brow New Age thinkers as Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*) and Gary Zukav (*The Dancing Wu Li Masters*). Like them, Gilder believes that scientific materialism, and its corollary, determinism, have breathed their last; that this opens new spiritual vistas and unlocks new realms of human potential; that the universal supremacy of mind over matter is becoming manifest. The difference is that when Gilder says "mind," he's talking about the minds of capitalists.

There are some laudable things about this book, not least the sheer ambition of building a huge new intellectual edifice. But the problem with huge edifices is that if the foundation falters, the whole thing collapses. And the cornerstone of Gilder's edifice comes with a hole drilled in it and an inscription that reads, "Insert dynamite here."

Actually "edifice" isn't quite the right word. If Gilder can be called a builder of grand systems, it is because his books are grandiose, not systematic. He is by no means a linear thinker, and he is always willing to sacrifice clarity of expression for rhapsodic effect. Indeed, of the various senses in which this is a New Age book, the most aggravating is its relentlessly right-brain, holistic mode of thought, its endless torrent of glowing metaphors and half-baked aphorisms:

> The quantum vision finds at the very foundations of the material world a cross of light. Combining a particle and a wave, it joins the definite to the infinite, a point of mass to an eternal radiance. In this light, we can comprehend the paradox of the brain and the mind, the temporal and the divine, flesh and the word, freedom and fatality.

Through the fog, the vague outlines of an argument can be discerned. At its core are two assertions, one about information technology and society, and one about modern physics. Each, by itself, is roughly on target. It is when Gilder tries to meld the two into a new worldview that problems arise.

The first of his assertions is that the modern economy is experiencing "a fast-rising ratio of mind to matter"—that "wealth in the form of physical resources is steadily declining in value and significance," and its place is being taken by "the creative accumulation of information and ideas." It never becomes clear precisely what Gilder means by this, even though he says it about a dozen times. But he seems to be referring to a trend that many people have already noted: more and more of our economic activity consists in processing information, and therefore less, relatively speaking, consists in processing energy and materials.

Gilder refers to this trend as the "overthrow of matter." This is a trifle hyperbolic. Matter—asphalt, polyester, fried chicken—remains pretty important stuff. Moreover, much of the information we process—patents, spreadsheets, invoices, contracts—is aimed ultimately at moving matter around: at getting food to stores, making assembly lines more productive, and so on. Maybe a better phrase would be the "leveraging of matter," since the point of processing the information is to manipulate matter more efficiently. But the phrase "overthrow of matter" has its uses: it helps Gilder posit a link between the philosophical implications of this economic trend and the philosophical implications of modern physics.

In the realm of physics, the "overthrow of matter" refers to the demise of scientific materialism and of determinism. Again, leaving aside Gilder's convenient phraseology, the substance of his claim is right. Quantum mechanics, the truly earthshaking scientific revolution that took place in the early part of this century, tells us that at the subatomic level some events are inherently unpredictable. Not unpredictable in the sense that a coin flip is unpredictable. The problem with predicting a coin flip is just that we don't have enough data (e.g., about the air's density, the velocity of the coin). In the subatomic realm, even if we had all the "relevant" data, we wouldn't be able to predict certain events. They are random at their roots.

Einstein, the last of the great determinists, stubbornly insisted that subatomic reality *is* like a coin flip, that our incomprehension of its behavior is due only to our ignorance of the causal forces impinging on it. This "hidden variable" interpretation of quantum uncertainty is what he had in mind when he said, "God does not play dice." Sounds reasonable. But Einstein has now been outvoted by every eminent physicist around. Quantum physics, they say, isn't *supposed* to make sense; our minds were built to make sense of the observable world, not the subatomic world.

Indeed, numerous counterintuitive notions become valid in the quantum realm. Take paradox, for example: two contradictory descriptions of subatomic


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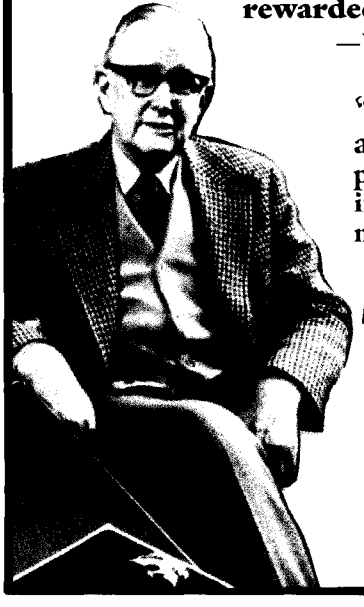

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behavior can be simultaneously true. Further, there seems to be a sense in which the act of observing affects what is observed. Some physicists make this sound fairly mundane: you stick something in front of an electron to gauge its speed and position, and this very act alters its speed or position. But others talk more grandly; some even sound eerily like Bishop Berkeley, declaring that reality is entirely a construct of our minds. In any event, Gilder is correct to say that quantum mechanics has raised grave questions about scientific materialism, its basic conceptions of cause and effect, and other bedrock notions of the Newtonian world.

O.K. So modern physics forces us to rethink determinism and question the primacy of matter. And information technology expands the role of information in the economy and, relatively speaking, diminishes the role of materials. Get the connection? Neither do I. I'll even accept, for the sake of argument, that you can call both of these things the "overthrow of matter." But I still don't see the dual application of this label as anything more than a coincidence. The two senses in which matter is being "overthrown" seem quite different.

But hold on. Gilder has one more piece of evidence that will tie things together. The microchip, which is at the heart of every personal computer and lots of other new gadgets, depends for its operation on the principles of quantum mechanics. And the microchip is what is driving the ascendancy of information in the economy. So the overthrow of matter in physics *is responsible for* the overthrow of matter in economics.

I don't know what exactly to make of this connection, except that the coincidence seems a little spookier now. And I suspect that this is the way the whole thing strikes Gilder—very, very spooky, too weird to be merely coincidence. Viewed this way, it becomes evidence for his belief that the Quantum Era, with all its philosophical, social, and political implications, is divinely ordained.

Maybe I'm reading too much into this. Maybe Gilder is making a more modest, if still nebulous, claim: that information technology, by furthering an economic "overthrow of matter," somehow reinforces the anti-materialist, anti-deterministic drift emanating from the "overthrow of matter" in quantum physics; and that the fact that this information technology *embodies* quantum mechanics merely reinforces the reinforcement, somehow. Still, it all comes back to God in the end; for this new philosophy of the Quantum Era, being non-deterministic, will have a place for free will. And it's hard to believe in a Christian God, as Gilder does, if you don't believe in free will.

Quantum Era philosophy will have a devastating effect on all false Gods. Marxism, behaviorism, logical positivism, "routine evolutionism" (whatever that is), deconstructionism—all will bite the dust now that determinism is dead. Nihilism and existentialism, too—they were "delusions arising from the great modern superstition of materialism." And as for hedonism: "The exaltation of mind and spirit leads to a higher order of experience and a richer access of power than any of the forms of physical dominance and exploitation that pervade the precincts of material pleasure." But there are lots of winners in the Quantum Era, even aside from free will and God. One is capitalism, "supremely the mind-centered system. Joined with microelectronics—the mind-centered technology—capitalism is reaching a new creative pinnacle." Space does not permit me to discuss the Quantum Era's validation of supply-side economics and Star Wars.

Again, I'm not as clear as I'd like to be on how all these things interconnect, or on precisely the train of logic that is supposed to lead to them. But this much is clear: to buy Gilder's whole philosophical package, you need first to buy the two claims he returns to again and again: (1) that the label "overthrow of matter" applies to what has happened both in quantum physics and in the economy; and (2) that the overthrow of matter in physics is what has caused the overthrow of matter in the economy. Both of these assertions are false.

First let's take assertion (2): that "the overthrow of matter in science leads plausibly to the ascendancy of information and mind in contemporary technology, and hence in economics as well." The word "plausibly" suggests a bit of insecurity about this claim. And this is as it should be. For it is easy to show that the economic ascendancy of information began not only before the invention of the microchip, but well before the first stirring of quantum mechanics around the turn of the century.

The most common gauge of this ascendancy is the percentage of the labor force that spends most of its time handling information—workers in the information-services sector (lawyers, accountants, teachers) as well as workers in the manufacturing sector who primarily handle information (Chrysler executives, their secretaries). This "information sector" began growing well over a century ago. It rose from less than one percent of the work force in 1830 to four percent in 1840 to 13 percent by the end of the century. By 1930—about the time quantum physics was coalescing, and decades before the invention of the microchip—one-fourth of American workers were handling information for a living. And by 1960, around the time the microchip was invented, the information sector was dominant. It accounted for 42 percent of the labor force, larger than the manufacturing sector, at 35 percent; the agricultural sector, at six percent; and the non-informational services sector (frying burgers, etc.) at 17 percent.

Clearly, the economic dominance of information is a long-term trend that predates both the scientific and technological developments to which Gilder attributes it. To the extent that it is technologically driven, its origins can be found in a host of 19th-century inventions, ranging from the telephone to the adding machine to the punch-card sorter. (This whole process has been thoroughly documented in James Beniger's excellent book *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*.)

There are more complications ahead for Gilder's emphasis on the microchip. The growth of the information sector, it turns out, has actually *slowed* since the chip entered the economy; the growth rate was much higher between 1940 and 1960 than between 1960 and 1980. This is not to say that the microchip isn't important, or even that it isn't a socially transforming technology. On the contrary, perhaps the microchip's contribution to the *automation* of information processing is what has slowed the expansion of the information-processing labor force. If so, then we should expect to see the information sector continue to grow briskly as a fraction of GNP even as it stagnates as a fraction of the labor force. (I haven't seen any data that would permit a definitive test of this hypothesis.) But if this turns out to be true, it won't provide the dramatic rescue that Gilder's thesis needs. In any event, this whole class of economic data is something Gilder might profitably ponder the next time he writes a book tracing a sea change in Western thought to the growing role of information in the economy.

In reply to this criticism, Gilder might claim that when he talks about the economic ascendancy of information and ideas, of "mind," he's not talking about the mundane sorts of information that carry so much weight in aggregate statistics, but about something more elusive: human ingenuity. Endlessly he rhapsodizes about how the future belongs to the creative, about how, in the Quantum Era, the value of goods lies less in their



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raw materials and the cost of production than in the genius of design. Thus, the value of computer hardware "resides in the ideas rather than in their material embodiment." Well, yes, it's true that a Cray supercomputer won't fetch much if sold as scrap metal. And neither will a 1989 Buick. Or a 1939 Buick. Again, Gilder is taking a centuries-old trend and making it sound as though it started at Bell Labs.

Faced with the collapse of assertion (2), Gilder can only retreat to assertion (1)—that the ascendancy of information in the modern economy is echoing the "overthrow of matter" in quantum physics, and is thus sustaining the anti-materialist, anti-deterministic upshot of quantum physics even if the ascendancy itself isn't really driven by quantum physics. But this isn't true either.

First of all, the information that is "overthrowing matter" in the modern economy *is* matter—the ink on paper, the electrons in a computer, etc. OK, strictly speaking, some information is in the form of energy—microwaves, light beams. But as Einstein showed, matter and energy are basically the same thing; either can be transformed into a like amount of the other in accordance with his famous equation. The important thing is that both mass and energy are physical things; the information in the modern economy *always* has a physical embodiment and *always* obeys the laws of physics.

Gilder tries to obscure this fact. He says that with optic fiber technology, the nervous system of the new world economy will "become chiefly a web of light and glass, in which messages flash around the world with no material embodiment at all." Light may seem like ethereal stuff to you and me, but try telling a physicist that it has no material embodiment.

If I were Gilder, I too would be trying to make information sound ethereal. And the reason isn't just that this adds to the book's spiritual aura. It is that once you recognize the fundamentally physical and predictable nature of the information flowing through computers and optic fibers, then Gilder's information-age ode to free will starts to sound comical; you see that the information age, far from realizing the resurrection of free will that quantum physics hints at, may end up sending free will back to philosophical purgatory.

After all, those desktop computers—at whose core, Gilder keeps reminding us, lie the non-deterministic principles of quantum mechanics—are themselves entirely deterministic; the data that come


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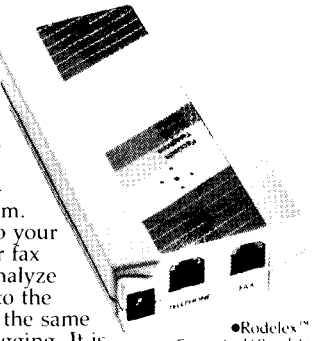

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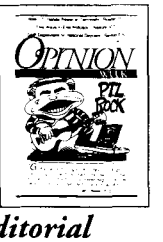


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out are inevitable, given the data that go in. Any quantum indeterminacy in these machines is entirely subterranean and never affects the flow of information. So the question naturally arises: What if people are the same way? What if all the information processing that governs their behavior is deterministic, even though, at some deep level, something quantum mechanical is going on? Computer technology has helped turn this question from a vague speculation into a distinct possibility.

Actually, Gilder notwithstanding, it has never been clear that quantum physics was good news for free will. Somehow it is hard to imagine that, even if our brains are influenced by truly random subatomic events, all this randomness adds up to the sort of coherent guiding agent that would merit the term "volition." It seems doubtful, as someone once put it, that free will "seeps in through the cracks." But, however dim the hopes for a quantum mechanical free will, computer science has dimmed them further. And some computer scientists—the more ambitious practitioners of artificial intelligence—are trying to turn out the lights completely. They believe it is possible in principle to build a machine as complex and subtle as a human being, and this is their eventual goal. Gilder would seize on setbacks in artificial intelligence as evidence that they're wrong. But you can equally well emphasize the field's occasional successes—machines that beat grand masters at chess, machines that outdiagnose most doctors within certain fields.

This is not to say that computers are anywhere near mastering even our most elementary cognitive tasks, or that they ever will. (Nor is it to say, by the way, that quantum mechanics won't someday shed light on some great mysteries of human existence.) The point is just that for the time being, information technology and computer science are having largely the opposite effect on philosophical currents from what Gilder claims. At its most basic level, his book is simply wrong.

The attempt to find some evidence of meaning in modern science is a worthy endeavor. But the reason it is needed is that science has undermined the traditional source of meaning—religion—by showing some of its tenets (e.g., creationism) to be incompatible with the observed world. And, obviously, it won't do much good to replace one empirically flawed doctrine with another. If any lasting solace is to be retrieved from science, it will have to be done carefully and rigorously, with pains taken to separate descriptive from prescriptive statements, and with any proposed connections between the two clearly spelled out.

Much of Gilder's book isn't as philosophical and abstruse as all this sounds. He makes sweeping philosophical pronouncements at the beginning and amplifies them at the end, but the middle chapters are a long, idiosyncratic, and, actually, mildly engaging history of microelectronics. True, there are philosophical asides and morals of the story, and they always mesh suspiciously well with Gilder's ideology. Still, if you had lopped off the first chapter and the last few chapters, you would have an entirely different book, a book that succeeds on its own terms.

In the acknowledgments, Gilder thanks his editor for "developing the manuscript from a history of the semiconductor industry into a theory of the microcosm." But at the last minute, someone at Gilder's publishing house must have had second thoughts. The book's subtitle was changed from the visionary-sounding *Into the Quantum Era of Economics and Technology*, which appears on the galleys, to the retrospective- and journalistic-sounding *The Quantum Revolution in Economics and Technology*. The switch was a good idea, but it came a few years too late. The jacket may keep this book off of the New Age shelves, but that is where it belongs. •

# *Sexual Perversity in Jerusalem*

**BY HILLEL HALKIN**

## Shira
## by S. Y. Agnon
## translated by Zeva Shapiro

**(Schocken, 585 pp., $24.95)**

Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Hebrew literature's sole Nobel Prize winner, has not fared well in English. That's something I can vouch for. Four years ago a translation was published of his *A Simple Story*, the most perfectly accomplished, though not the most typical, of his novels. As its translator, I had a royalty agreement with the publisher, and just this summer I received my first check. It was for $1.98.

Translation, indeed, is no doubt the main reason for the English public's indifference to an author whose collected works in their original Hebrew edition (which was swelled by numerous posthumous volumes) have gone through close to 20 hardcover reprintings in Israel. Agnon is a notoriously difficult writer to translate, and while it is an exaggeration to say (as has been claimed) that in principle he is untranslatable, in practice he has defeated most attempts. His first two novels to appear in America, *The Bridal Canopy* (1967) and *A Guest for the Night* (1968), are virtually unreadable in English, and the several volumes of his translated short stories are not on the whole a great improvement. It is hardly surprising that he remains unappreciated by English readers, who are likely to wonder what the fuss and the prize are all about.

The villain in all these cases is overfaithfulness to the original—a perennial pitfall for any translator, but a special danger for one working on Agnon. Because Agnon's style is so idiosyncratic, there is a greater tendency than usual to stick closely to its phrasing in order to convey its unique quality. Yet this tactic must prove fatal for two reasons. The first is that Agnon was the last great practitioner of the age-old Hebrew tradition of intertextuality, that is, of repeatedly citing and alluding to the classic texts of Judaism in his own work. Although such echoes, which can serve a variety of evocative, connotative, or even comic purposes, often go unnoticed by contemporary Israeli readers, who lack a knowledge of Jewish sources, they blend so naturally into the Hebrew that they are rarely an impediment there. Whoever hears them is enriched by a secondary level of meaning, but whoever doesn't is not baffled or derailed. In English, however, unless resourcefully dealt with (which may mean omitting or rephrasing them), they tend to turn into a meaningless static that leaves readers feeling they have gotten a garbled message.

More serious is the fact that Agnon's Hebrew is archaic even when it is not playing on old texts—or rather, pseudo-archaic, since it is not so much a throwback to older forms of Hebrew as it is an invented dialect based on them. It is difficult to explain the linguistics of this in a



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few words, but the salient point is this: an observant Jew of a deeply conservative, if not reactionary, turn of mind in most things, Agnon considered the modern Hebrew that evolved in Palestine in this century to be a vulgar demotic unmoored from Jewish tradition and developed an alternative language of his own that was in effect a one-man counterculture. His prose comes as though to answer the hypothetical question: Suppose the Zionist settlers who revived Hebrew in Palestine had been as Jewishly learned as their forefathers, had been impervious to foreign influences, had been gifted with superb literary taste and the ability to model their language on the most lucid and pristine examples of Hebrew prose that rabbinic literature has to offer, on such texts as the Mishnah, Rashi, Maimonides, and the *Shulhan Arukh* (the Code of Jewish Law) of Joseph Karo—what would the Hebrew spoken and written by them have been like?

Hence, the translator's problem: since English literature has no Mishnah, no Maimonides, no Rashi, no *Shulhan Arukh*, and nothing remotely like them, there can be no close approximation in English to Agnon's Hebrew. One can capture its essential qualities—its clarity, its deceptive simplicity, its casual erudition, its sly humor, its Talmudic singsong—by a variety of stratagems; but any attempt to reproduce its actual diction is doomed to sound hopelessly stilted. Paradoxically, the only way to be faithful to its genius is to be extremely free with it.

That is precisely what most of Agnon's English translators have not been—and regrettably, what Zeva Shapiro, in her translation of Agnon's novel *Shira*, has failed to be, too. A few examples of the kind of language this failure results in will have to suffice out of the myriad that could be given:

• In the second chapter of *Shira*, which is set in Jerusalem in the late 1930s, its protagonist, Dr. Manfred Herbst, a German-Jewish immigrant to Palestine, finds himself thinking of Lisbet Neu, an attractive young woman whom he has vaguely pondered having an affair with. Wondering whether she still lives in Jerusalem, since he hasn't seen her for a long time,

> . . . he observed to himself: Actually, what's it to me if she's in Jerusalem or not? Even if she is in Jerusalem, and if I do see her, I have nothing to say to her. Still, what a joy it is for a tent dweller to venture into town and see a fine young woman there.

Has Herbst, then, run off to join the Bedouins, since he apparently lives in a tent? No, he is actually a lecturer in Byzantine history at the Hebrew University and lives with his wife and two daughters in a suburban house. "Tent dweller" is the Hebrew *yoshev ohel*, an expression that occurs originally in the Book of Genesis in the verse "Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents," and that in rabbinic usage came to mean (based on the midrash that Jacob spent his time studying Torah) a dedicated scholar. Retranslating the slavish literalism, what Herbst is saying is, "Still, it's a pleasure for a scholarly recluse like myself to come to town and see a pretty young lady."

• Two chapters later we find Herbst—who barely an hour ago left his wife waiting to give birth in a maternity ward—being seduced by Shira, a nurse he has just met in the hospital. As the two are about to make love, the narrator breaks off, saying:

> I will stop in the middle, leaping over those things that transpired between him and her, and continue to relate what followed, that is to say, after Manfred Herbst took leave of Shira.

"Those things that transpired between him and her," *d'varim shebeyno leveyna*, is in fact simply a rabbinic euphemism for "sex." A translation that conveyed the actual spirit rather than the mere letter of this phrase might read, "It would be tactful of me to stop at this point and skip to what happened afterward, when Manfred Herbst left Shira's apartment."

• Like modern English, but unlike Yiddish, German, Polish, and Russian, the languages that the Jews of Eastern Europe spoke and were surrounded by, Hebrew does not have two separate words for the singular "you," one polite and one familiar. Partly under the influence of Polish, however, Eastern European rabbinic Hebrew adopted the device of occasionally using the third-person singular, often accompanied by a title, to indicate the polite "you," and Agnon favored this usage, especially when his characters are "really" speaking Yiddish or German. It would seem absurd to try to imitate this in English, but Shapiro does just that. Here, for example, is part of the bedroom scene in which Shira seduces Herbst:

> Herbst looked at her and said in a whisper, "Miss Shira is tired, I will go now so she can sleep." Shira said, "I'm not tired. I don't want to sleep and there's no reason to go."... Herbst said, "Miss Shira should stretch out and close her eyes." Shira opened her eyes wide . . . and asked, "What will Dr. Herbst do meanwhile? Will he sit with me and sing me a lullaby?"

All this between a man and a woman who are about to jump into bed! Granted, Shira's shift to the familiar "you," which takes place immediately after this exchange, is a significant moment in the Hebrew, but there are other ways for a


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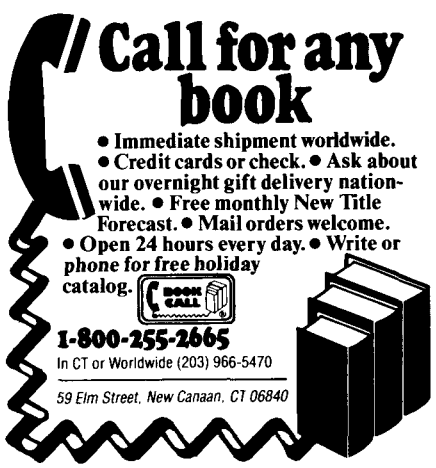
creative translator to indicate the change of tone than by the total sacrifice of credible English.

Alas, credible English is sacrificed throughout this translation, which is so stiff and awkward, let alone prone to bizarre errors (such as rendering *titon*, the Polish-Yiddish word for "tobacco" that Agnon preferred to the modern Hebrew *tabak*, as "titanium"), that it can only inflict further damage on Agnon's already unfortunately low English reputation.

*Shira*, which was published after Agnon's death in 1970, would be problematic reading even in a better translation, if only because it is unfinished. The most "secular" of Agnon's major works—it is the only one in which the world of traditional Judaism plays but a marginal role—it was also the most difficult for him to write, and he labored on it for the last 20 years of his life without bringing it to a conclusion. True, he did compose a final chapter for its fourth and last part, but the preceding chapters are missing, and there is no indication of how the gap was meant to be bridged.

Still, *Shira*'s last chapter reveals a good deal about Agnon's conception of the novel, because it provides us with his resolution of a narrative that, at the point of its breaking-off in manuscript, can go in different directions. The story of an adultery between an intelligent and decent but indecisive academic and a brusque nurse whose mysterious powers of seduction are unexplained by either her unattractively mannish exterior or her sardonic manner, the novel keeps us guessing whether Herbst's donnishly bourgeois life will be ultimately ruined by the relationship or emerge intact, and perhaps even strengthened.

In this respect, *Shira* resembles *A Simple Story*, in which a marriage is also threatened by the husband's obsession with another woman. Yet the two books have opposite endings. Hershl Hurvitz in *A Simple Story* ultimately opts for the safety of hearth and home; Agnon's projected denouement for *Shira* has Manfred Herbst casting himself into the abyss of Eros. Written in a lurid chiaroscuro that leaves the everyday world shadowed out in the background, this brief episode takes place in a leprosarium to which Herbst has traced a vanished Shira, and ends with his kissing her on the lips so that, by contracting her disease, he may join her as a fellow pariah.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*Shira*'s semi-surrealistic ending was clearly no hasty improvisation, since Agnon laid the ground for it by having Shira disappear enigmatically in Part III of the novel amid hints that she is ill. His problem in finishing the book, it would seem, was not getting Shira to the leper hospital physically, but getting Herbst there psychologically. Indeed, while it is evident from the dialogue of the scene that it was supposed to take place at the end of Part II, on the same day that Herbst celebrates the circumcision of a newborn son, this juncture arrives with him far from ripe for so drastic an action, which was apparently why Agnon decided to add a fourth section to the novel.

Oddly, though, despite a growing number of tantalizing references to the subject of leprosy itself, the eight-and-a-half chapters of Part IV do not seem to bring the book appreciably closer to its goal. A study in psychological paralysis, Herbst inches so fitfully toward his ultimate plunge that one wonders whether a completed Part IV would have found him ready for it either. Nor is he immobile just in regard to Shira. He is no less so in his relations with his maternal, dowdyish wife, which remain on an uninterrupted plane of tired affection; in his academic career, which has reached a dead end in an unwritten magnum opus that he can do no more than keep sorting through the notes for; in his wishy-washy attitudes toward the violent world of Jewish and Arab nationalism around him; even in his inner emotional life, which—despite the turmoil it has been thrown into by Shira, who has released in him a frightening configuration of repressed sadomasochistic and latently homosexual feelings—never moves in any significant way toward heightened self-awareness or passion.

In fact, like nearly all of Agnon's novels, *Shira* is a curiously static book. Starting out with the promise of a linear plot, it soon turns into a spiral revolving around itself in a seemingly loosely organized series of episodes, anecdotes, and sketches that advance the story line at a snail's pace. For every step forward in Agnon's longer works one usually takes several steps sideways; and it is not only in *Shira* that one finds oneself wondering whether the narrative will catch up with its own ending. No doubt this sense of drift helps to convey the deep passivity of Agnon's protagonists (who, like Herbst, never move from their inertial center unless impelled by outside forces), but this hardly suffices in itself to account for so anti-novelistic a style. Indeed, to understand why Agnon's novels are written as they are, one must give some thought to his fictional aesthetic, which was closely related to the peculiarities of his prose.

Both in person and in his fiction, Agnon was wont to utter Jewish pieties whose very platitudinousness, as his critics have pointed out, ironically undercuts itself. Perhaps this is why these same critics, who have detected the influence on Agnon of Mann, of Kafka, of Freud, of Flaubert, have never taken very seriously his own statements about his writing, as when he declared in his Nobel Prize speech: "Who were my literary masters? First and foremost, the books of the Bible, and after them, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrash, and Rashi's commentaries on Scripture." And yet, though Agnon certainly read and assimilated European authors all his life, this avowal must, I believe, be taken at face value.

Indeed, while no Eastern European-born writer who chose Hebrew as a medium did not feel intensely Jewish, Agnon was practically alone in his ambition to write fiction that would be Jewish not only in content, but in form as well. Few of his contemporaries even bothered asking whether there was such a thing as specifically Jewish fictional forms, for from its inception in the mid-19th century, modern Hebrew literature was by definition a matter of borrowing European genres and showing that what could be accomplished in French, German, or Russian could be accomplished in Hebrew, too. By 1908, when the 20-year-old Agnon, newly arrived in Jaffa, published his first widely acclaimed story, "Agunot" ("Abandoned Wives"), from whose title he took the pen name he was thereafter known by, Hebrew literature had accomplished a good deal; nevertheless, it would have taken an extraordinarily self-assured young man to decide that he would do in Hebrew what no one in Europe was doing, because the Jewish tradition of fiction was different.

This, though, is what Agnon set out to do, laboring not only to craft his own unique Hebrew, but to isolate the distinctive features of biblical and, especially, rabbinic narrative and make them his own. If one compares the formal elements that gradually came to character-



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ize his work with those of the classical rabbinic story, particularly of the Palestinian and Babylonian midrash—the spare yet allusive diction, the descriptive minimalism, the heavy reliance on dialogue, the homiletic narrative voice, the dialectic shuttle of the sentences, the free use of symbol and allegory—one can see how well he succeeded.

In fact, Agnon's first book-length work, *The Bridal Canopy* (1931), might be called a midrashic novel—which is to say, it is not really a novel at all, but rather a web of stories and stories-within-stories branching off from a central narrative, which concerns the travels of a poor Hasid named Reb Yudl who sets out to collect donations for his daughters' dowries. What gives this material its unity, keeping it from being a *Decameron*-like collection of essentially unrelated tales, is a set of common themes related to Reb Yudl's journey, such as marriage, hospitality, charity, and the workings of Providence, much as the different stories and homilies in a book of midrash all relate to the same biblical text. In the end, Reb Yudl marries off his daughters in a grand comic finale and all ends happily, but his adventures themselves are little more than a clothes tree for the book's anecdotes to be hung on.

Is it possible, though, to write a "midrashic novel" that is not comically picaresque, and in which the fate of the hero is both realistic and serious? Agnon seems to have struggled with this problem at length, because he had not yet solved it when he wrote *A Simple Story* (1935), the most conventionally plotted of his long works. Yet in his last three novels—*A Guest for the Night* (1939), *Yesteryear* (1945), and *Shira*—he returned to the anecdotal structure, which he now put in the service of several thematic preoccupations that had engaged him all his life.

Perhaps the most central of these might be called the Law of Frustrated Ends, an Agnonian principle that states that if A sets out for B, he will first end up at Z, since on his way he will run into C, who will tell him about D, which will remind him to visit E, in whose home he will encounter F and G, who will persuade him to accompany them to H, etc. Such concatenations, sometimes nightmarish and sometimes comic, occur often in Agnon's stories, in which human self-will is always revealed to be impotent—a theme that he never tired of reiterating, whether positively, as in *The Bridal Canopy* (trust in God and all will be well), or negatively (try taking your destiny into your hands and the winds will blow it away). If his heroes' passivity leaves them at the mercy of their fate, so does their activity. Indeed, activity in Agnon's fiction *is* passivity in an especially futile form.

Agnon's last three novels work by combining this law with a midrashic digressionism. We see this clearly in *Shira*, in which from the start Herbst's intentions (his first, fateful encounter with Shira takes place near a telephone booth to which he has gone to arrange a meeting with Lisbet Neu) are subverted by an infinitely mischievous reality. Consider, for example, this typical sequence from the last chapter of Part I:

1. A restless Herbst, longing for Shira, goes out for an evening walk at the urging of his unsuspecting wife.

2. Just then a city-bound bus passes by, and before Herbst can think twice, he is on it.

3. Getting off the bus downtown, Herbst notices some English soldiers; there follows a narrative digression about his feelings toward the English, and another digression on the history of the neighborhood he is in.

4. Herbst encounters a shoe-shine boy and decides to have his shoes shined; there follows an anecdote about the shoe-shine boy's family.

5. Herbst makes up his mind to visit Shira, who lives in the area, and buys her some chocolate in a candy shop.

6. On his way to Shira's, Herbst runs into Lisbet Neu, in whom he is no longer interested. Embarrassed at having failed to keep in touch with her, however, he tells her that he has written her phone number on the chocolate wrapper in order to call her, is caught out in his lie, and—his embarrassment growing—tries to make up for it by giving her Shira's chocolate as a gift.

7. Lisbet gracefully accepts and suggests that Herbst see her home. Unable to decline, he sets out with her in a direction opposite to Shira's. There follows a digression on the neighborhood they pass through and another on Lisbet Neu's father.

8. Herbst leaves Lisbet and—since it is now too late to visit Shira—goes to the bus stop to return home. The bus does not arrive, though, because its tires have been punctured by nails laid on the road by Arab insurrectionists; there follows an anecdote about a Jewish woman recently murdered by Arabs.

9. Tired of waiting for the bus, Herbst decides to visit Shira after all, but finds her in the company of a tiresome woman friend and is unable to enjoy a moment alone with her.

10. Herbst frustratedly leaves Shira's and returns to the bus stop, only to discover that the last bus has already left. And so, weary and disheartened, he fi-


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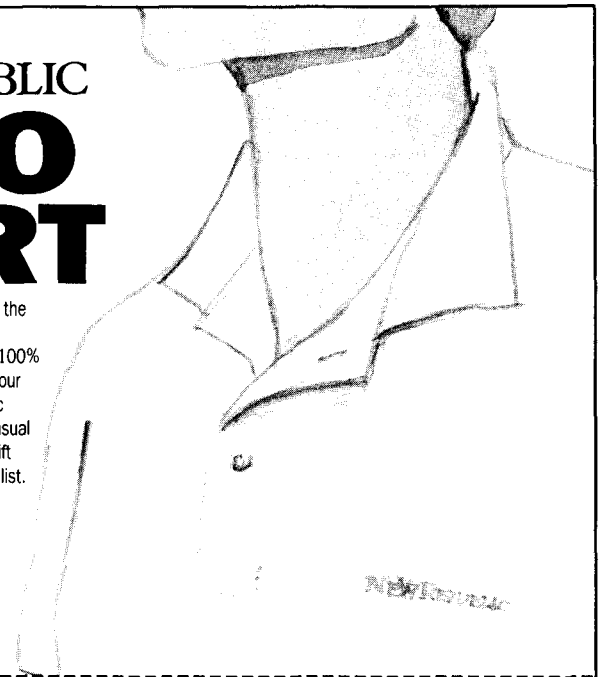

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nally takes his solitary walk—a long, tedious hike home through the empty midnight streets instead of the brief stroll his wife had in mind for him.

The Agnonian novel is indeed an anti-novel, repeatedly belying our conventional assumptions about what a novel should be like: mocking not only the expectations of its characters but those of its readers as well, it continually "deconstructs" its own plot, from which it keeps meandering away. *Man trakht un got lakht*, says the old Yiddish proverb: men plan and God laughs. It is one of the paradoxes of Agnon's fiction that this old-fashioned folk wisdom, yoked to the models of traditional Jewish texts, should have resulted in a body of work so modernist in its teasing structure.

In an illuminating afterword to *Shira*, Robert Alter proposes that the novel is Agnon's "vision of the role of art in human reality," and that Shira herself (whose name means "poetry" in Hebrew) is a semi-allegorical figure. Although Alter puts his case cogently, as always, I am not convinced. As an Orthodox Jew and a writer, Agnon may well have had mixed feelings toward art, but I doubt that his feelings were *so* mixed that he would have personified the Muse as a graceless and cynical nurse whose best feature is her abrasive honesty. And if Shira is an unlikely Tadzio, the professorial Herbst, whose closest approach to artistic creation is a childishly abortive attempt to write a poetic tragedy set in ancient Byzantium, is an even less plausible Gustave von Aschenbach, the novel's *Death In Venice*-like ending notwithstanding. Shira, moreover, is a common Israeli name that, considered as a symbol, can stand in the book for other things. (Such as modernity, or even secular Hebrew culture: the novel's narrator tells us that Shira is named after a grandmother called Sarah, a neat emblem of the Zionist transmutation in Palestine/Israel of a covenantal Judaism into a desacralized Hebraism.)

Personally, though, despite Agnon's penchant for allegory, I see no compelling reason to allegorize Shira at all. She is sufficient as the perversely unfeminine femme fatale that she is, and Herbst's fascination with her makes perfect sense in terms of the unconscious fantasies she fulfills, quite apart from more abstract explanations. In his final scene with her in the leper hospital there is indeed a kind of self-transcendence, but need this be that of embracing a theophany? It is enough to think of it as the transfiguration of a man who for once in his life has done something passionate, bold, and selfless, albeit thoroughly mad.

Whether Agnon meant in Part IV to trace the development of this madness, as he did with Hershl Hurvitz's mental breakdown in *A Simple Story*, or to introduce it as a deus ex machina, like the last-minute death from rabies of the hero of *Yesteryear*, is something we are unlikely ever to know. Although additional fragments from *Shira* keep turning up (one was recently published in the newspaper *Ha'aretz*), they have thrown no new light on the question. The most interesting fragment from the novel appeared in Agnon's lifetime as a story called "Forevermore," which he excised from Part IV and published separately. It is a wonderful tale about a scholar named Gabriel Gamzu (known to Agnon's readers from the story "Edo and Enam") who ends up in a leprosarium, pursuing in its library the lost civilization that he has devoted his lifetime to studying—yet while its thematic connection with *Shira* is obvious, it would not have moved the story of Manfred Herbst forward one whit. Indeed, the longest of *Shira*'s digressions, it shows Agnon advancing deeper into the midrashic labyrinth of the novel rather than trying to find his way out of it. Having already written the end of *Shira*, he seems to have been in no hurry to get there.

HILLEL HALKIN is a writer and translator who lives in Israel.

**CORRESPONDENCE** *continued from page 6*

heeled, with a few socially outcast scholarship students.

RICHARD HORN
*Princeton, New Jersey*

## Helpful reminders

**To the editors:**

With reference to TRB's comments ("Attitude Problem," October 9): The journalist's job is, indeed, to be helpful. It is assumed that he or she is truthful.

MICHAEL HENDERSON
*Portland, Oregon*

## Famous last words

**To the editors:**

I wonder how Francis Fukuyama's prediction that "the end of history" is upon us will look at the end of the next century (Washington Diarist, "The End of Everything," October 16). Perhaps as myopic as that of Charles Duell, Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office, who in 1899 said, "Everything that can be invented has been invented."

ANDY AARON
*New York, New York*

**TRB** *continued from page 4*

aren't made through the appropriations process. (For example, the President would be unable to veto the part of the costly S&L bailout attributable to McCain's interference with federal regulators on behalf of his chum Charles Keating.) The bill's main effect would be to let the President hold legislators' pet projects hostage in negotiations. The inevitable Norman Ornstein, an expert on the line-item veto along with so much else, argues that the long-term effect would be to increase government spending. Presidents' pet projects, such as missiles, tend to cost more than legislators' pet projects, such as federal office buildings.

But President Bush has earned the right to a true line-item veto. And that's not a compliment. I say, give it to him—provided that it includes everything, even Social Security, and not just annual appropriations. This may have to be done informally. The Democratic leadership in Congress should publicly agree that any spending the President objects to will be eliminated unless two-thirds of both houses disagree. That would be the functional equivalent of a line-item veto, for as long as the agreement lasted. What the heck, give him an informal version of that other phony panacea, too: a balanced budget amendment. Promise an expeditious up-or-down vote on any balanced budget Bush happens to submit.

At this point for the Democrats, victory or defeat on a particular legislative issue is less important than repositioning the parties in the eyes of the voters. Legislative defeats—like the recent failure to override Bush's veto of abortion funding for rape victims—can be political victories. The Republicans have done a brilliant job of positioning themselves as the anti-big-government party without actually opposing any of the biggest manifestations of big government. The line-item veto would call their bluff. Bush could continue his refusal to raise taxes if he wished, but he could no longer blame the resulting deficits on the Democrats. And the deficits would continue unless he took highly unpopular steps like trimming Social Security.

The arrangement would be good for the country as well as for the Democrats. The Republicans have taught fiscal hypocrisy to the voters, who need to be cured of it just as badly. But it would be a nightmare for the President. There is nothing a man like George Bush hates more than making unpleasant, controversial decisions. The line-item veto is an invitation to an endless series of unpleasant, controversial, no-win decisions. Let him have it. He deserves it.

**MICHAEL KINSLEY**



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# PARIS DIARIST

## Out of tune

THE UNLIKELY CAPITAL OF THE emerging new Europe of "the 12" is Brussels, a hitherto sleepy city from which important laws and norms will henceforth go forth to apply even to the most windswept Ionic island. This new Europe is an intricate visionary weave by the continent's technocratic class; and since it hasn't yet taken effect, and therefore hasn't had many consequences, it can still be called progress. But the people who will live under the new dispensation will not, through any conscious or explicitly political expression, have wished it into being. For them the new Europe, like the old British empire, will have developed "in a fit of absence of mind." Mrs. Thatcher, for whom national patriotism is virtually a primordial sentiment, has been resisting an overarching Europe every inch of the way, earning the disdain of those who always seem to know what is inevitable. Labor, once Europe's most indignant enemy, is now, for partisan purposes, its biggest booster, along with the Tory wets—the equivalent of liberal Republicans—whom the Iron Lady has humiliated. Here in Paris, there is much enthusiasm at the top for governance from Brussels. But this enthusiasm, I suspect, is more an index of President Mitterrand's fear of a Germany outside the binding European framework than of some abstract (or even practical) transnational Idea. But when *le peuple* finally realize how much of the nation's power has been expatriated to shadowy multinational institutions, we will really see how people get alienated from politics.

NOT THAT BRITISH INSULARITY has all that much to recommend it. Little England seems to specialize in the forcible repatriation of refugees to places from which they face persecution and even death. During the Nazi period the British forced Jewish refugee ships back into European waters and thus their passengers into the caldrons. After the war the British repatriated hundreds of thousands of escapees from Russia and Yugoslavia, surely knowing what awaited them back home. And now Mrs. Thatcher, the premier anti-Communist in the world today, is preparing to ship some 50,000 desperate Vietnamese boat people now in Hong Kong back to Vietnam. (Of course, in eight years she will be handing all the people of Hong Kong over to the People's Republic of China.) It is a hideous thought, these hapless Vietnamese being forced to return—something we should not condone. But since the United States won't settle them, we scarcely have the credentials even to criticize.

VICE PRESIDENT QUAYLE HAS HAD the bad taste to call the Soviet Union a "potential adversary." Not enemy, mind you, but adversary. For this gaucherie R. W. Apple in (for me) the *Herald Tribune* has cast him beyond the circle of grace. Quayle, wrote Apple, is out of tune with Bush-Baker policy toward Moscow. Well, put me down, with Quayle, as out of tune, too. If the Soviet Union is not now at least a "potential adversary" of ours, why do we have a zillion dollars' worth of nukes targeting its military bases and cities? The will to believe in happy endings is stronger than the habits of skepticism. Look how many Americans swallowed the former Kremlin line that the radar station at Krasnoyarsk didn't violate the ABM Treaty. I remain skeptical of Gorbachev's long-term intentions. My old friend Edward Jay Epstein, a visitor here and author most recently of the provocative, contrarian book *Deception*, reminds me that this is not the first time the Soviets have tried capitalist markets to rescue themselves from their own brutal ideological follies. That, after all, was why Lenin initiated the New Economic Policy in 1921. In any case, Gorbachev has persuaded the West of its stake in him, and certain awkwardnesses tend to get ignored. For example, the national and ethnic stirrings that imperil Gorbachev's hold on power are not some mere annoyance on the high road to *perestroika*. They are of the essence of the struggle for liberty. There is no real reform of the Communist system, Gorbachev or no Gorbachev, if the Soviet empire isn't allowed to dissolve. And if peoples of independent history and identity remain under the boot of the Red Army after Gorbachev has "succeeded," then what, in the end, will all the excitement have been about?

THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES HAVE reversed course: the three Arab girls may now wear their veils to school after all. To a certain civil liberties mentality this is an open-and-shut case: people should be able to wear what they want. And maybe they should. But the *chador* episode is not really about civil liberties. It is about the relationship of the Arabs to the West—in this case, to the values of Republican France. French society had long been riven by the bitter war between an intolerant Catholic clericalism and an equally intolerant secularism. The great compromise reached during the Third Republic was that the churches would have their own institutions, including schools (which are largely financed from the public treasury), but that government institutions would be altogether free of religious practice or demonstrations. This applied not only to teachers but to students as well. Jewish students couldn't, for example, wear skullcaps in class. If they wouldn't do without, they went to Jewish schools. There are, of course, similar interdicts against Catholic pupils. Harsh? Maybe. But the utter secularity of French education had become part of the French civil religion, the only way out of a religious civil war. There has been in recent years a vast migration into France from Arab North Africa. There are now four million Arabs in the country, eight percent of the population. Migrations of this magnitude usually reflect an acknowledgment by the migrants that the cultures from which they came were in some way crippling. People go to a new country to live a new life. A history of immigration is therefore also a history of assimilation. The Arab migration to France, however, seems to be an exception. Many Arabs apparently come to France to lead their old lives. They bring with them their old chains, which is what the *chador* really is, a symbolic isolation of the woman from the world. The *chador*, in fact, had gradually been falling into disuse over the last century, only to be revived with a vengeance by the mobs of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Now it will be worn by tens of thousands of Muslim girls in French public schools. This will be only the start of religious aggressiveness against the secular culture. But why, then, did their parents come to France with their superstitious baggage, to France against which their countries had rebelled and against whose civilization of rationalism and science they seem so hostile? A less rhetorical question: Why did a Socialist government, ordinarily the guardians of laicism and secularism, bend to pressure from the Muslims? One reason certainly is that they feared the social disruption, and perhaps even the terrorism, which standing down the fundamentalists might have caused. As one local journalist put it, "This is a religion with teeth."

**MARTIN PERETZ**



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